RAILWAYS AND PORTSMOUTH SOCIETY 1847-1947

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Summary

Initially benefiting the middle classes because of the high price of fares, the railways were later able to place travel within reach of most people, although in so doing they observed many of the niceties of Victorian and Edwardian life. By bringing goods from specialist producing areas, the railways contributed to changes in working-class diet and to the emergence of chain and departmental stores; by introducing excursionists and later holiday-makers to Southsea they played a central role in the growth of the resort. In two world wars the railways underpinned the movement of supplies, troops and evacuees. The railway station itself offered a range of facilities to society, even if employees' working conditions were paternalistic, but at the same time the construction and expansion of Portsmouth Town Station did lead to the demolition of a number of houses. More unusually, the location of the railway terminus at Landport outside the fortifications caused a shift in the centre of gravity of the town from the old core in Portsmouth to Commercial Road.

Cover:
LBSCR poster promoting travel on its line to Portsmouth.
(National Railway Museum/Science & Society Picture Library)

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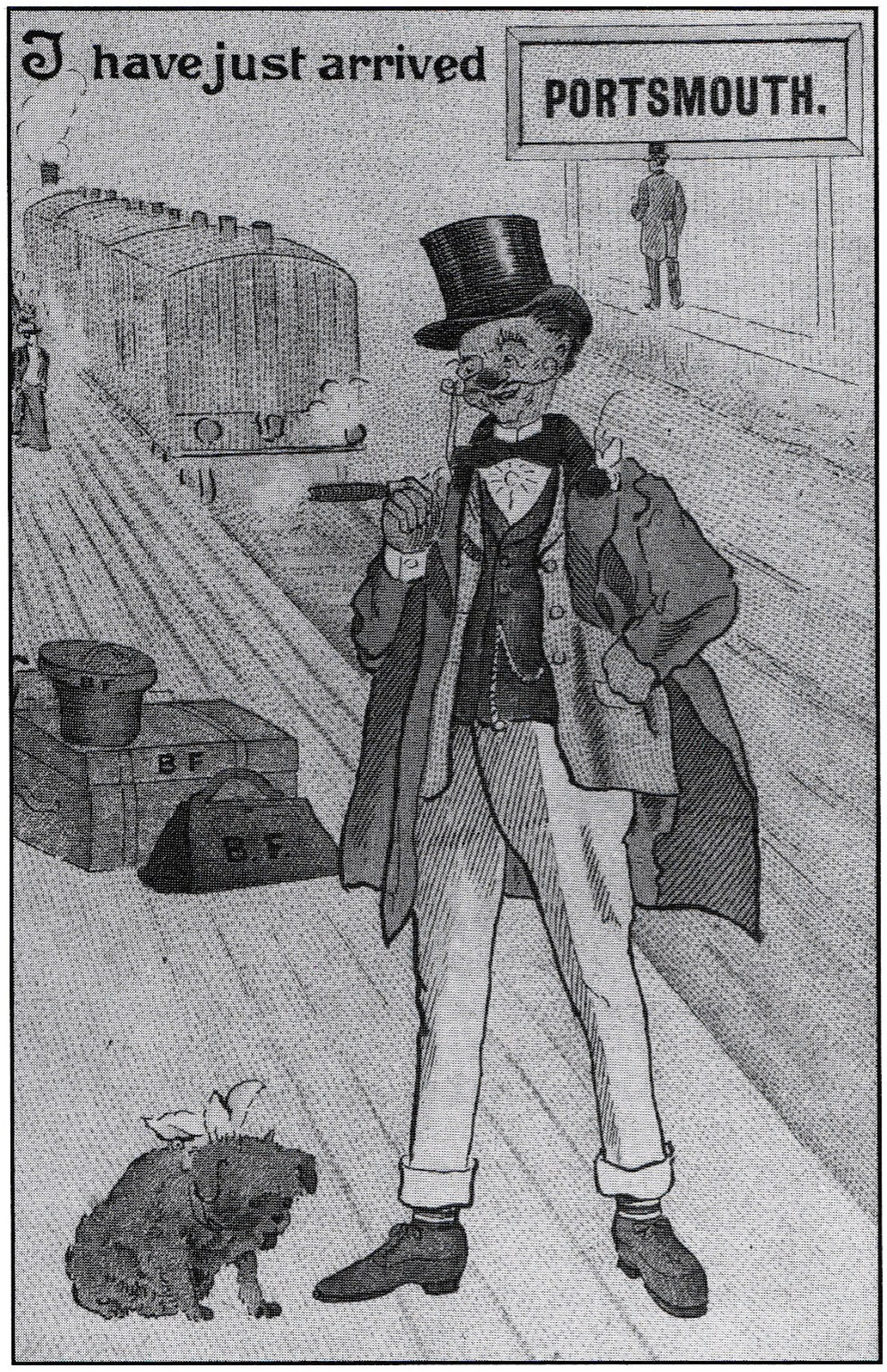


A cartoon of perhaps a not entirely typical railway passenger at Portsmouth.

Introduction

However much the railway is now regarded as a mundane element of daily life, its advent in Thomas Carlyle's perceptive 1850 remark 'set all the Towns of Britain a-dancing'.[1] Straddling the period between the canal and coach era and the age of motor transport in near-monopolistic fashion, the railway was one of the central agencies in the transition of Britain from a rural to an urban-industrial nation during the nineteenth century. Yet it is a curious fact that most railway studies concentrate on the system itself, especially locomotives, and pay scant attention to the impact on economic and social life, to say nothing of the strategic and ceremonial functions so important in a naval dockyard town such as Portsmouth, in addition to its role as an important user of land. This paper is intended to be complementary to such historical accounts, of which there are a good number; the reader is referred to them for relevant points of detail.[2] Suffice it to say here that the town station opened in 1847, being jointly operated by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) and the London and South Western Railway (LSWR), the Portsmouth direct line to London via Guildford was completed in 1859, the extension to Portsmouth Harbour opened in 1876, Fratton Station and the East Southsea Railway date from 1885, and electrification was inaugurated in 1937. The nationalisation of the railways on 1 January 1948 provides a convenient point at which to draw this study to a close.

Passenger Traffic

The great initial advantage ushered in by the railways was not so much that they linked towns, for this had long been achieved by stagecoach and road carrier, but rather a dramatic reduction in journey time, thereby facilitating both social intercourse and the transaction of business. Mail coaches in the 1830s aimed at an average speed of 10 mph, rendering Portsmouth at best some seven hours distant from London.[3] But even via Brighton the rail journey could be achieved in 3 hours 10 minutes in 1849, while the fastest LSWR express travelling an almost identical 95 miles via Bishopstoke (later Eastleigh) took a mere 2 hours 50 minutes.[4] Such an enormous overnight increase in speed has never since been equalled by overland transport, small wonder that trains came to be seen as projectiles whose velocity was one-quarter that of a cannon ball.[5] To achieve their average speed of 34 mph, LSWR trains would have had to touch 60 mph between nine stations en route. The opening of the Portsmouth direct line, operated by the LSWR, contributed further to what contemporaries referred to as 'the annihilation of time and space', in 1861 London being reached in 2 hours 15 minutes, made possible by the shorter distance of 74 miles with only five intermediate stops, rather than improved average speed.[6] The strength of these early improvements should be placed in the context of later developments, for by 1908 the journey to Waterloo on the direct line had been further reduced by only 13 minutes,[7] and the later electric expresses with their notable ability to accelerate away from stations still required 1 hour 34 minutes for the journey, although the Southern Railway (SR) always argued that the intention of electrification was to improve reliability and frequency rather than substantially higher speed.[8] Perhaps this is just as well since the ride was anything but smooth, even seasoned travellers having the feeling that derailment was imminent as speeds of 90 mph were routinely achieved.[9]

The journey times described were for the fastest trains, whose frequency between London and Portsmouth increased from one via Brighton and one via Bishopstoke daily in 1849 to one an hour for much of the day after electrification. Predictably, since it was a novel form of transport and was barely patronised by the working class on grounds of cost and indeed need, at the outset the railway provided only a small number of daily services, six via Brighton and seven via Bishopstoke to London. This was not dissimilar to the 16 coaches running between London and Portsmouth in 1835, but the seating capacity was rather different.[10] Of these trains, 11 possessed first- and second-class accommodation only, the journey taking as long as 4 hours 20 minutes since in order to generate traffic most trains stopped at most stations. The other two comprised parliamentary trains that, while having first- and second-class sections, uniquely provided third-class accommodation, for which fares were fixed at 1d a mile under the Railway Regulation Act of 1844. This

Schools class locomotive 930, Radley, passing the signal box at Portsmouth high level at noon on 4 April 1937.
(National Railway Museum/Science & Society Picture Library)

SR publicity for the electrification of the Portsmouth-Waterloo direct line.
(National Railway Museum/Science & Society Picture Library)

legislation also required companies to run one such train a day in each direction. Parliamentary trains stopped everywhere and were notoriously slow: 5 hours to London via Brighton and 5 hours 20 minutes via Bishopstoke. Most railway companies ran these trains either very early or very late in the day when the presence of the *hoi polloi* would not interfere unduly with middle-class patrons. It was therefore interesting to see that despite the remark by the chairman of the LSWR that 'an early morning train gives the industrious poor not only a greater sense of security, but also encouragement for early rising', his company's Parliamentary train for London departed from Portsmouth at the civilised hour of 8.20 am, and it was that run by the LBSCR which left at the inconvenient time of 6.30 am.[11] To see the departure of the parliamentary train on the Portsmouth direct line timetabled in 1861 for noon must have caused raised eyebrows, while the journey of 2 hours 55 minutes - faster than all first- and second-class trains via Brighton and Bishopstoke - must have been regarded as provocation. Parliamentary trains lingered on until the 1880s; in fact none appeared on the Portsmouth direct timetable for 1876, but for some time before they disappeared separate third-class accommodation was on offer.[12] During this transition phase, therefore, there were four classes of traveller, arguably reflecting one of the characteristics of Victorian society, a preoccupation with social status, and supporting Dyos and Aldcroft's belief that distinctions of class, if anything, hardened when travelling by rail.[13] Eventually third-class carriages were added to all trains; indeed by 1875 three-quarters of all passengers travelled third, a proportion reaching 96 per cent by 1911.[14] As 'rail travel became the province of the common man',[15] so the frequency of all services was augmented, some six trains each way per hour passing through Portsmouth on the London direct route.[16] The rapidity with which traffic increased was quite remarkable; after only 23 years of operation no less than 580,000 people used Portsmouth Town station in 1870.[17] Over the three days of August Bank Holiday in 1933 some 78,000 tickets were sold at Waterloo for Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, and although passengers for the latter destination passed through Portsmouth, it does not detract from the numbers carried. In 1936 it was reported that some 971,000 people a year travelled on the Portsmouth-Waterloo service alone.[18]

Accustomed as one is today to attenuated Sunday services, it is not surprising to find that this situation obtained from the outset, the LBSCR running two and the LSWR three trains from London in 1849. In contrast with the working day, which then included Saturday, provision for third-class travel was proportionately substantial, for the provision of parliamentary trains was *de rigueur*. There were in fact powerful social forces which would have disallowed all services on the Sabbath, the archdeacon and prebendary of Winchester, C J Heath, arguing that 'the religious observance of the Lord's Day is a duty binding on us as Christians', railways 'tending to corrupt public morals as well as dishonouring God and bring the ordinance of religion into neglect'.[19] This attack, directed at the LSWR, was ignored by the directors who placed profit before godliness, something which Walton argues the railway companies in the south of England were able to do without the pangs of conscience

afflicting those in the north of the country.[20] Portsmouth Borough Council was in no doubt as to the commercial power of the railway, strongly supporting its potential contribution to trade and property values at the council meeting of 4 May 1840. There was, therefore, a touch of irony in the council's later resolution on 26 April 1847 that for workmen preparing the line to have worked on three successive Sundays without permission of the magistrates constituted a 'desecration of the Sabbath'. By encouraging Sunday travel the railways made a big contribution to the general erosion of the importance of the Sabbath in British life. It was the combination of the city council, acting as the voice of business interests, and the SR which in 1934 led to Southsea being declared 'the resort without restrictions', culminating in the irreverent and controversial 'Exit Mrs Grundy' poster depicting the said frumpy lady stumping off 'to the station'.[21]

At the outset the railways rightly assumed that their principal income would derive from the monied classes; this being so they were pleased to make provision for the transport of patrons' coaches on special flat wagons and the horses in horse boxes. Pictures of early railways appear not to feature this traffic, but the 1849 LBSCR timetable is informative. The assumption was made that passengers owning carriages would want to travel by expresses, and that such people would wish to move between main towns. Accordingly facilities for handling coaches and horses were provided at 15 of the 27 stations between London and Portsmouth, where a special loading dock was later provided in Station Street;[22] Havant was so graced but not Emsworth. It is difficult to see how what must have been a very tight schedule could have been adhered to in the event of horses and carriages requiring to be dealt with at more than a few stations. Perhaps for this reason the 6.30 am express from Portsmouth, arriving in London at 10.15, allowing a day's business to be undertaken, and the 5 pm departure from London, specifically excluded horses and carriages. The rationale for allowing 3 hours 10 minutes for the train carrying horses and carriages to London, but 3 hours 45 minutes for that without, is unclear. Punctuality then as now may have been a flexible notion. The practice of accepting such traffic endured into the motor age, the LBSCR making covered wagons available for carriages on the payment of a premium, while grooms travelling with horses were treated as third-class passengers. The railway reminds us that horses were not the only animals employed to draw conveyances in the nineteenth century, for ponies under 12 hands and donkeys with 'small basket carriages' all attracted particular fares. The old order seemed to change slowly, for as late as 1912 the company had special rates for horses when accompanied by riders or grooms 'For the convenience of gentlemen hunting in the vicinity of the line'.[23]

Not only could the railway outgun the stagecoach in respect of speed, but also with regard to fares charged. In the 1830s stagecoach fares were between 3½d and 4½d a mile for inside seats and between 2d and 2½d for outside travellers, beyond the reach of the labouring classes who were earning approximately 2s a day.[24] Even first-class fares charged by the LBSCR between Portsmouth and London in 1849 were 2½d a mile, while a second-class ticket cost 1¾d and a third 1d a mile.[25] It came to be appreciated that the profit margin on each ticket could be reduced, but yet profit increased if large numbers could be carried. In circular fashion, such a strategy encouraged even more people to use the system. By the early 1900s third-class passengers were paying ½d a mile, despite an increase in living standards in the preceding half century.[26] The LBSCR was offering weekend returns between Portsmouth and London in 1903 for ½d a mile third class, ¾d second, and 1¼d first class.[27] Differential pricing was introduced from the beginning to promote custom. The Brighton company issued day return tickets at a price less than the cost of two singles, in some instances substantially so. During the 1870s a first-class day return between Portsmouth and Brighton could be had for slightly less than 1½d a mile compared with 2½d a mile for a first single, and 1¼d for a third-class single.[28] These considerable savings, however, applied to first and second, but not to third-class and parliamentary travellers who were ineligible for such tickets - the privileged were favoured as was seen to be their right. With the later introduction of workmen's returns a more equitable situation obtained, although these tariffs were not available at Portsmouth as late as 1898, despite the enabling legislation contained within the Cheap Trains Act of 1883.[29]

'Periodical' tickets could be obtained for one, three, six and 12 months, with progressive savings the lengthier the period bought,[30] special first-class season tickets could be had by naval and military officers stationed at Portsmouth,[31] and three-day tickets at reduced fares for servicemen were available for a range of destinations in conjunction with the appropriate railway companies. During the SR period workmen were eligible for half ordinary return fares provided their destinations were reached by 8 am; however, for the privilege they were required to waive claims for loss or damage to property, and for injury, fatal or otherwise, unless negligence on the part of the railway could be proved.[32] In a comment on their perceived value to society, warders returning from conveying prisoners were permitted by the LSWR to ride in second-class carriages with third-class tickets.[33] From 1903 cheap fares were offered for travel between Portsmouth and Chichester on what were called rail motor trains, even though they were steam powered, consisting of only one or two carriages. Since rail motor services were additional to ordinary services, the company defensively pointed out that it did 'not undertake that [they] shall start or arrive at the respective time specified', perhaps thereby justifying the low price of the tickets available.[34]

What were termed 'market tickets' were sold to facilitate travel by Portmuthians to nearby towns on market days, although they were valid only for specified trains. In 1889 four trains departed on Wednesday mornings for Chichester; the fares were certainly competitive, a first-class ticket costing ld a mile, a second ¾d, and a third ½d a mile.[35] These market tickets were later applied to all stations up to 35 miles from Portsmouth, although on Thursdays only.[36] Apart from a raft of excursion tickets and cheap evening returns, from 1896 special tickets were sold for evening theatre trips to and from

Fareham, and SR had low prices for music halls, concerts, farm and forestry camps.[37] There was even provision for 'walking tours', accompanying dogs being eligible for half the price of the return rate.[38] That it was possible for commercial travellers to qualify for reduced fares is a commentary on an era when samples had to be manhandled in a suitcase prior to the advent of the company car.[39] However much the general public may have benefited from this panoply of special offers, it has to be said that railway employees benefited most of all. Workers in the locomotive department of the LSWR in the 1890s could claim fares one-quarter of the second and third-class rates, as could their wives, while dependent children were charged one-eighth of these.[40] Such concessions appear to have been applicable across the company, and almost certainly the LBSCR too. Employees choosing to travel second class between Portsmouth and London Waterloo paid a little less than ½d a mile, while those travelling third did so at less than ¼d a mile.[41] At these rates even railway workers could contemplate a holiday away from home. In the reverse direction, at the turn of the century fares to Chichester during Goodwood Race Week were actually raised since the LBSCR felt it necessary to restrict the rush of cheap short-journey traffic; doubtless it was not so much the quantity of the traffic as its quality that was at the root of the decision.[42] For the benefit of those who could afford to travel, the Goodwood race cards were graced with railway timetables.[43]

Writing in 1864, Measom remarks that in Portsmouth 'everything looks, breathes and smells of soldiers, sailors and dockyardmen, the three classes who rule the state of society' and, indeed, in comparison with fashionable Brighton, Portsmouth was plebeian.[44] Doubtless stemming from this, the LBSCR discriminated in favour of respectability and profit. In 1849 the company's express and mail trains had a faster run between London and Brighton than between Brighton and Portsmouth for an almost identical distance, a result of the greater number of stops being scheduled for the coastal run.[45] In this sense Portsmouth was treated rather as a branch serving the main line, for the company judged that its more lucrative route would be that conveying the well-to-do between Brighton and the capital. Despite the importance of the dockyard's links with the Admiralty, priority was accorded the mail train from Brighton, which arrived in London at 1.10 pm, compared with that from Portsmouth at 3.45 pm. That the mail train from London to Portsmouth was almost an hour faster than mail in the opposite direction must have reflected the company's perception of the relative importance of the two. The discrimination practised by the LSWR in respect of mail was initially total, for no services at all were available in 1849, mail to and from London being handled at Gosport.[46] Greater provision was made for the movement of horses and carriages from London than to it, four and two trains respectively being so assigned by the LBSCR in 1912; whether this resulted in a surfeit of horses and carriages in Portsmouth is unclear.[47] In similar vein, 'periodical' tickets were at the outset not sold at Portsmouth, presumably since regular commuters to the capital were not expected.

The frequency of services and fares charged were key elements in the evolution of the railway, but only slightly less important for passenger traffic were the carriages themselves. For much of the nineteenth century railway carriages were to an extraordinary degree the very embodiment of class distinction, causing Dyos and Aldcroft to remark that they represent some of the most telling physical evidence of Victorian society.[48] Drawing on the style of the stage coach, LSWR first-class carriages were enclosed from the beginning, passengers' luggage being on the roof, as was the guard, who must have suffered in winter. Each compartment contained six seats, and conditions were so cramped that travellers' knees were 'pressed uncomfortably hard' against those opposite. This was comparative luxury, for in the second class the seats were simple boards, while the compartments were open-sided, causing the possession of an umbrella to be strongly recommended. Third-class passengers had to sit in the open on a wooden frame placed on carriage trucks, which for a short period were simply attached to goods trains, giving rise to the witticism that 'in some of the trucks was the swinish multitude, in others a multitude of swine'. Parliamentary legislation eventually called for protection from the weather, so the LSWR introduced a simple box with two panes of glass in the roof, but without windows at the side.[49] These primitive conditions were gradually improved, small windows at the top of the third-class compartment doors in LBSCR trains existing by 1852.[50] Coinciding with the opening of the Portsmouth direct line in 1859, second-class carriage seats were fitted with leather cushions and backs.[51] Separate compartments were retained reflecting the great importance attached to privacy in Victorian society, in contrast with the USA where the substantial social mobility caused open carriages to be the rule.[52] It is interesting to note that when small windows, known as Muller lights, were fitted between compartments in second-class LSWR carriages in 1865 after a murder by the said Muller had been committed on a train the previous year, in the hope that the fear of being observed would act as a deterrent, such carriages were shunned by the travelling public.[53]

All the early carriages were small with four wheels, and while this type was still in use in the 1890s on the Southsea branch, the standard of accommodation was very different from their forebears.[54] Six-wheeled carriages became common in the 1880s, having been introduced by the LBSCR in 1879, and continuing in use into the inter-war period; shortly afterwards much longer vehicles, closely resembling present-day stock with two sets of four-wheel bogies, came into service.[55] Some of these even possessed toilets, but since they were accessible only from the platform, passengers were frequently overcarried between stations. The hybrid steam railcars used on the Southsea branch from 1903 boasted eight wheels, but in possessing no second-class seats they were indicative of the blurring of social class divisions that was becoming apparent in Edwardian Britain. However, second-class seating was still on offer by the LBSCR in 1904.[56] The growing sophistication of society was reflected in the appearance in 1901 of restaurant cars on the Portsmouth direct line, albeit accessible only from

Interior of the railcar used on the Southsea railway.
(PMRS)

the two adjacent coaches.[57] Electrification brought the use of corridor coaches allowing all passengers to avail themselves of restaurant cars, which were franchised out to Frederick Hotels, 'offering full meal and light refreshment service in a most lavish way'.[58] The classes may not have mixed, but at least third-class travellers did have access to restaurant facilities.[59]

The penny postage may have reduced the cost of dispatching letters, but it was the expedition with which the railway mail trains could deliver them which enabled business to be transacted at much greater speed than hitherto. By the early 1870s there was a direct mail service, in addition to a night mail, to and from London, Sundays included.[60] To assist the process four-wheeled mail vans sporting a magnificent royal crest were introduced by the Brighton company in 1878.[61] Such was the volume of traffic and variety of destinations that it is probable that eventually mail may not have been exclusive to mail trains, for in 1900 mail was being collected from the town station letter-box eight times a day.[62] A second form of communication arguably owed even more to the railways, for it was quickly appreciated by Cooke and Wheatstone, the inventors of the electric telegraph, that the easiest way to link towns was to construct lineside wires. The first operational line was opened in 1839 on the Great Western Railway, but in 1844 the partners undertook a 21-year contract at £1,500 per annum to provide a telegraph between Portsmouth dockyard and the Admiralty alongside the LSWR route; the railway company took a half share in the scheme. Completed in 1845, the line was said to be the longest in England at the time.[63] No evidence has emerged to show how the crossing of Portsmouth Harbour was achieved, but it is likely that a submarine cable was employed, making it one of the earliest of its kind. The possibility of instant transmission of messages represented nothing short of an information revolution, and with some alacrity the railway companies set up a telegraph office at the town station. By 1880 it was open seven days a week. Furthermore in the 1860s the Electric Telegraph Co, using the lineside wires, established offices close to the station. The General Post Office also joined the fray. As demand rose telegraph poles on both sides of the railway track became

The W H Smith bookstall at Portsmouth station in Edwardian times.
(Lens of Sutton)

increasingly festooned with wires; a surviving photograph shows a pole at Cosham carrying 42 wires.[64] Of great significance to the railways was the use of the telegraph to pass messages between signal boxes regarding the movement of trains, thereby enhancing public safety and indeed confidence in the railways.

Of major significance to the nation as a whole was the railways' need for the standardisation of time in order that their finely crafted timetables could be translated into practice. 'Natural time' was determined by the sun, resulting, for instance, in Bristol time being 11 minutes later than in London. Greenwich mean time was quickly adopted by the railways, and came to be known as 'railway time', transmitted hourly by the telegraph. Portsmouth achieved some notoriety as being one of the last towns in Britain to accept GMT, in the 1870s.[65] Thus for more than two decades a double time standard obtained in the town, giving rise to no little, but apparently undocumented, inconvenience. The clock in the facade of the town station must once have had an importance in Portsmouth life now difficult to comprehend.

The dissemination of information of a general nature was also promoted by the railways, for not only were London newspapers available more quickly than hitherto, but also by the latter part of the century they were arriving sufficiently early in the day for almost everyone to have identical access to news as Londoners. The town council was certainly pleased to be informed in 1896 that morning papers were arriving on board the 7.55 am train.[66] At the same time local newspapers were able to report national events more quickly by means of messages sent via the telegraph; this was still sufficiently novel for the *Hampshire Telegraph* to be inserting the fact beneath the heading of pieces covering parliamentary debates in the 1870s. Another source of information was the book, which came to the aid of the middle-class traveller who was prevented by social etiquette from entering into conversation with unknown people, especially since journey times were so much shorter than in coaching times. Thanks to the energy of W H Smith, a book could be bought at the town station. Aided by the improvement in literacy and the abolition of the tax on paper in 1861 (newspaper tax had been withdrawn in 1853), a mass market began to appear for cheap magazines and 'penny dreadfuls', originally on sale only at the station bookstall. The term 'railway literature' came to be one of abuse, against which the railway companies reacted by having Bibles chained to

Fratton Station staff in early SR days.
(PMRS)

lecterns at their London termini; but the railway novel or yellowback was a lucrative business and the publishing houses were not to be gainsaid.[67] An Edwardian photograph of the town station bookstall shows an open-fronted structure with an extensive counter on which all manner of publications are displayed, while the assistant is almost obscured by magazines hanging on a sagging line stretched across the counter.[68] No longer was W H Smith a bourgeois institution and, as Richard Attick has said of the railway, 'perhaps no other single element in the evolving pattern of Victorian life was so responsible for the spread of reading'.[69] The profits made by W H Smith, who became First Lord of the Admiralty, had an additional influence on Portsmouth, for in 1879 he responded generously to an appeal for funds towards St Mary's, Portsea, with a subscription of £100.[70]

The obvious need for precision in the operation of the railways was conducive to a military-style ethos and, indeed, it was common for ex-Army personnel to be recruited in the early days. The complexity of the fare structure outlined above also contributed to the establishment of a multitude of rules with regard to passengers, so that on the one hand travellers, particularly those in the upper social echelons, were to be given every assistance, but they were nevertheless required to comply with regulations, which had the full force of law. Indeed, passengers travelling without a ticket and refusing to give their name and address ran the risk of being detained 'by any officer' of the railway.[71] The maximum penalties which could be imposed for offending against LBSCR by-laws in 1912 were: £5 for obstructing officials or trespassing on stations; £5 for damaging notice boards; £2 for travelling without a ticket, but £20 or one month's imprisonment for each subsequent offence; and £2 for the first, and £5 for each subsequent conviction of a raft of 22 offences ranging from gambling, spitting, intoxication, damage to property, to indecent language.[72] Improper use of the communication cord could result in a fine under the Regulation of the Railways Act of 1868, while the Southern Railways Act of 1924 provided for boys under the age of 14 to be whipped with not more than six strokes of a birch rod for throwing stones at trains, a measure somewhat surprisingly still in force in 1939.[73] Railway police were employed from the outset, although initially they sometimes doubled as ticket collectors, booking clerks and signalmen, and their importance may be judged from the towering figure of an officer positioned squarely behind the town station superintendent in staff photographs. Given the nature of contemporary working-class culture, however, many of the rules must have been difficult to enforce.[74] Arguably they represented the company's perception of its institutional importance in society.

The Victorian middle classes did not subscribe to the notion of travelling light and, in any case, it was regarded as beneath their dignity to carry their own luggage. 'With a party of children, nurses with luggage, perambulators and bath tubs, a man had to be something of an organiser to get through without losing his temper and some of his belongings as well' rued a *pater familias* of events at Portsmouth town en route for the Isle of Wight c.1872.[75] The consequence was that porters abounded at stations, eager to please and secure a tip. At the 1891 census 158, or 39 per cent, of the 409 employed in Portsmouth by the railways were described as porters and servants; since this excluded officials, clerks, drivers, firemen, guards and level crossing keepers, it is reasonable to suppose that porters did comprise a strong body of men. The railways would, however, always deliver luggage to residences and hotels from the town station for 6d a package.[76] Porters did have other duties: J E Barrett recalls that at town station in the 1920s they used to call out the names of all the stations at which trains would stop, resplendent in red ties which, it was said, were the modern equivalent of the red neckerchiefs which could easily be removed and waved in the event of an emergency.[77]

Some travellers avoided the need for porterage by sending their luggage in advance, making use of a well-developed system of carriers whose horse-drawn carts would collect luggage and take it to one of their 'receiving offices', or depots, from which large carts would journey to the station at regular intervals during the day, and of course vice versa. The railways seem not to have involved themselves in this work to any great extent, although in 1874 the LSWR did maintain a receiving office in Palmerston Road, Southsea, and the LBSCR one in Clarendon Road, also in Southsea. The Midland Railway had a presence in Russell Street, Southsea, even if it was franchised out to an agent.[78] The location of these offices in middle-class Southsea is a comment on the location of the demand for this kind of service. Much of the traffic was placed with the carriers, of which there were six appointees working for the LBSCR in 1881; the largest of these, Curtiss & Son, had their receiving office in Broad Street, Portsmouth, and an office at the town station itself.[79] Six other carriers were also in business at this time, including Pickford, and Chaplin and Horne; the founder of the latter firm, William Chaplin, had been chairman of the LSWR before his death in 1859.[80] Some carriers were even empowered to issue tickets: Shepherd Bros in Commercial Road sold tickets for all destinations as agent for the Great Northern Railway.[81] The larger undertakings like Pickford and Curtiss were effectively forwarding agents, organising the

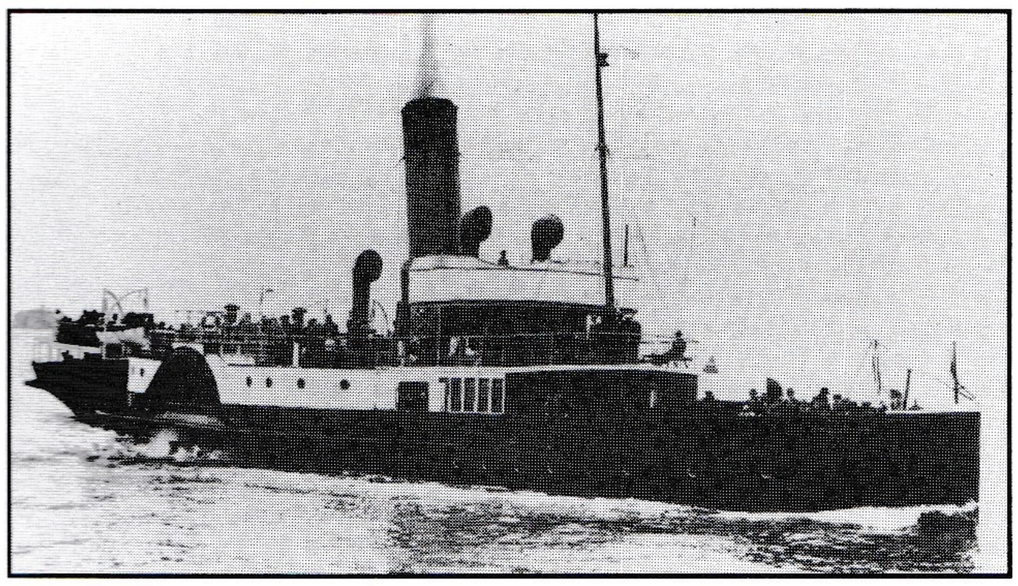
Wagons belonging to the road haulier Colyer's in Cosham Station yard, c.1905.
(PMRS)

transfer of luggage internationally and, if need be, storage facilities to boot. Inevitably they had their eye on the monied class, an advertisement placed in a local directory in 1881 stressing that it was officers' baggage with which they were concerned.[82] With the continuing development of tourism, luggage in advance became a dominating item at the town station in the summer months of the inter-war era, such traffic being encouraged by the SR's charge in 1935-6 of 1s a piece from anywhere in the country.[83]

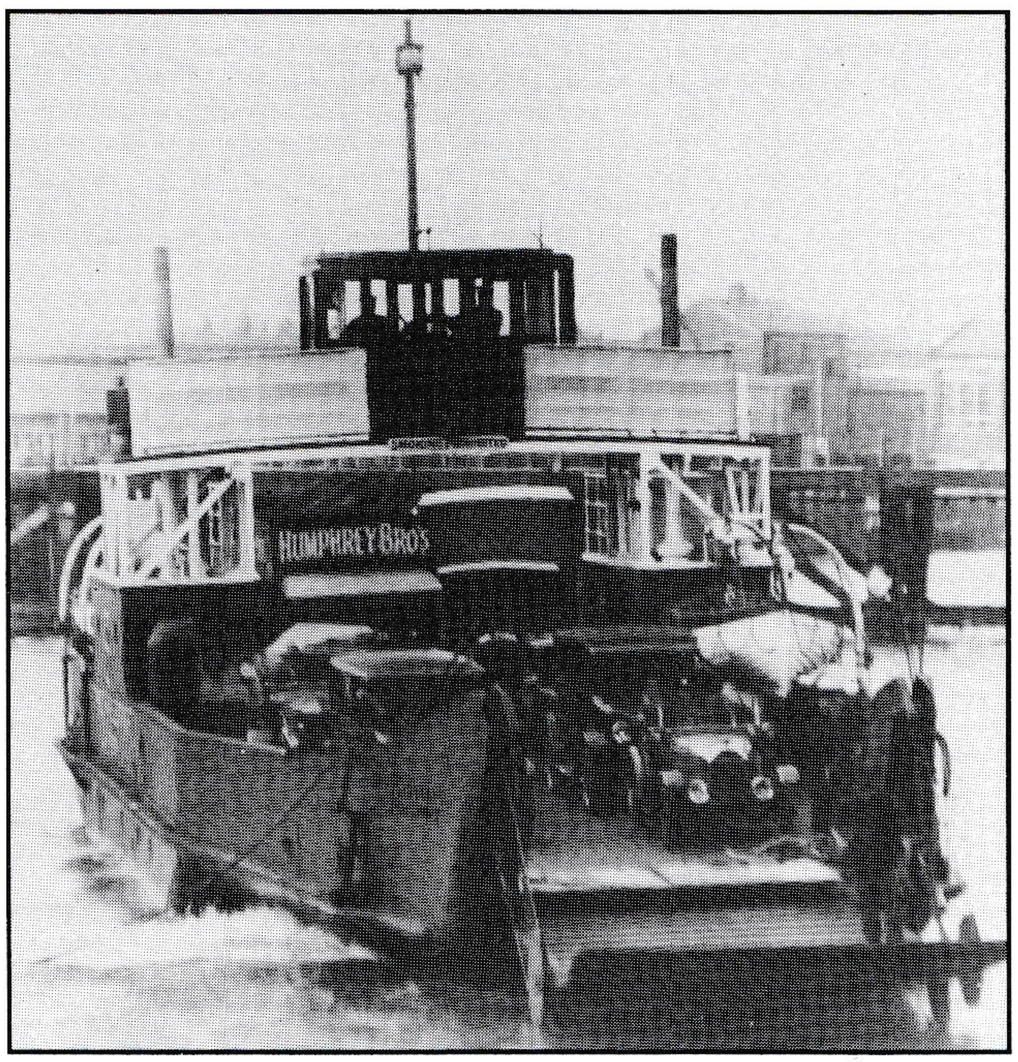
To the congestion engendered by carriers' carts was added that of the horse-drawn cabs, for whom the town and Fratton stations in particular were important focal points. The railways somewhat autocratically issued their own licences to cab owners who were exclusively permitted to use the stands at stations, a situation that gave rise to some friction. The matter was taken up in 1896 by the town council which requested the railways to withdraw their restrictive practice and allow any of the hundred or so cabs licensed by the local authority to stand in station yards.[84] The problem was not unique to Portsmouth, and eventually in 1907 the system was abolished nationally, although predictably cab drivers were nevertheless required to abide by company regulations when on railway property.[85]

For thirty years after the opening of the railway, further street congestion was created by the growing number of holidaymakers travelling to and from the Isle of Wight. Initially passengers had to take a cab or horse bus from the town station to the Portsea Hard; with the opening of Clarence Pier in 1861 much of this traffic was transferred to the new facility, where two paddle steamers could be handled simultaneously. By this time the ferry services were appearing in the LBSCR timetables and through fares from London to the Isle of Wight quoted; clearly the railways had reached an agreement with the two ferry companies, the Southsea and Isle of Wight Steam Ferry Co and the Isle of Wight Steam Packet Co. The importance of the route via Clarence Pier was confirmed in May 1865 when the Landport and Southsea Tramway, Britain's first statutory tramway, began operations. Its termini were propitiously located inside the town station and on the pier itself; the cars were drawn by two horses and two luggage vans were attached.[86] These arrangements continued until 1876 when Portsmouth Harbour Station was opened, removing at a stroke the inconvenience caused by this transit traffic. The railways then bought the Portsmouth Harbour Pier Company, acquired the ferry companies in 1880, and within three years added a vessel capable of carrying 426 passengers, and two others with a capacity of 551 each. When the SR was formed, the company inherited five ferries.[87] A monopoly it was, but the integration was plain to see; it enabled two million passengers to be carried annually between Portsmouth and Ryde in the late 1920s. The traffic may have been largely transit and of limited benefit to Portsmouth, but the ferry crews were local and railway employees, even if their conditions of work differed from those on land.

The paddle steamer Shanklin, which came into service between Portsmouth and Ryde in 1924.
(PMRS)



The roll-on roll-off ferry Fishbourne with a motley collection of interwar vehicles.
(PMRS)



Freight Traffic

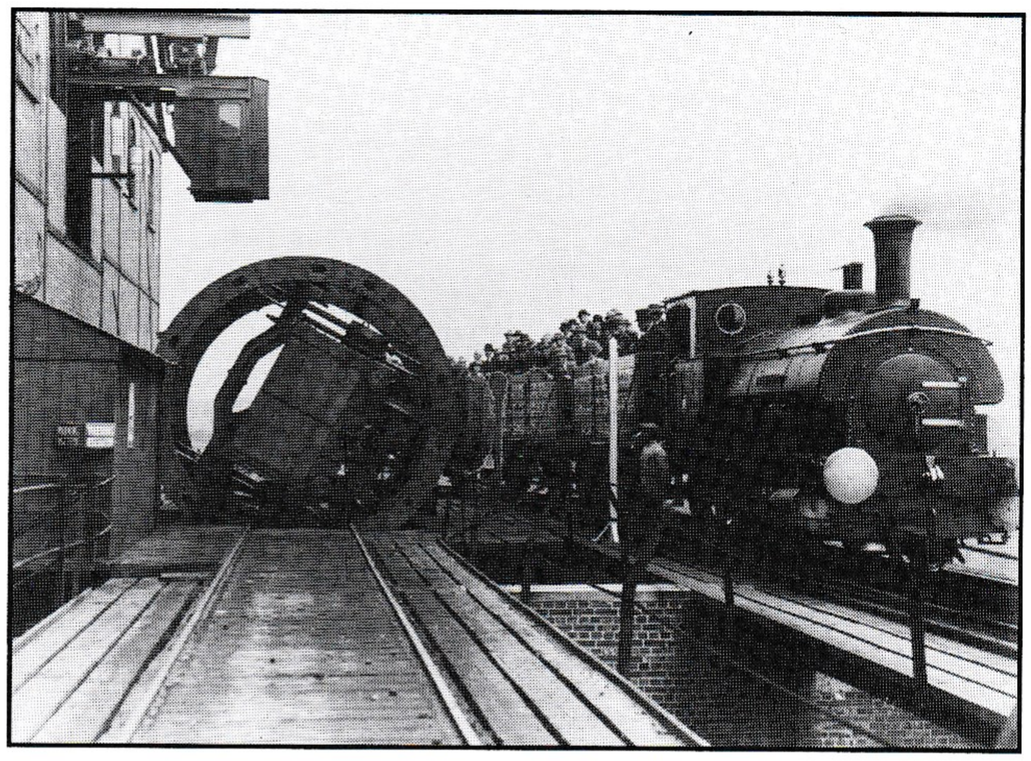
In common with railways elsewhere, the initial expectation was that the bulk of revenue would derive from passenger traffic, a notion supported, the dockyard apart, by Portsmouth's weakly developed manufacturing sector. At first goods wagons, primitive vehicles only 12 feet long and lacking brakes, were attached to passenger trains, but at least a modest goods depot was built simultaneously with the 1847 passenger station in Commercial Road.[88] It is thought that income from freight began to exceed that from passengers nationally during the 1850s and, allowing for the nature of local industrial activity, this situation was probably achieved a decade or so later in Portsmouth.[89] Certainly the LSWR felt confident enough about anticipated traffic to schedule goods trains for the Portsmouth direct route at the latest in 1876. There was one train a day in each direction. A night goods left Nine Elms freight depot at 2 am, arriving at town station at 8.55 am after making 15 stops, most of which lasted 10 minutes, but that at Guildford, the largest town on the route, no less than one hour. In the opposite direction departure was at 4.45 pm, arriving at Nine Elms at 11.47 pm, the longest stops being at Petersfield and Haslemere.[90] With an overall running time akin to the stagecoach, but much faster than road carriers' wagons, speed was not an issue, but lateness was sufficiently common for the drivers to be warned not to make up lost time by 'running down inclines'; they were also reminded that speed through facing points should not exceed 20 mph, given the tendency for goods wagons to become derailed.[91]

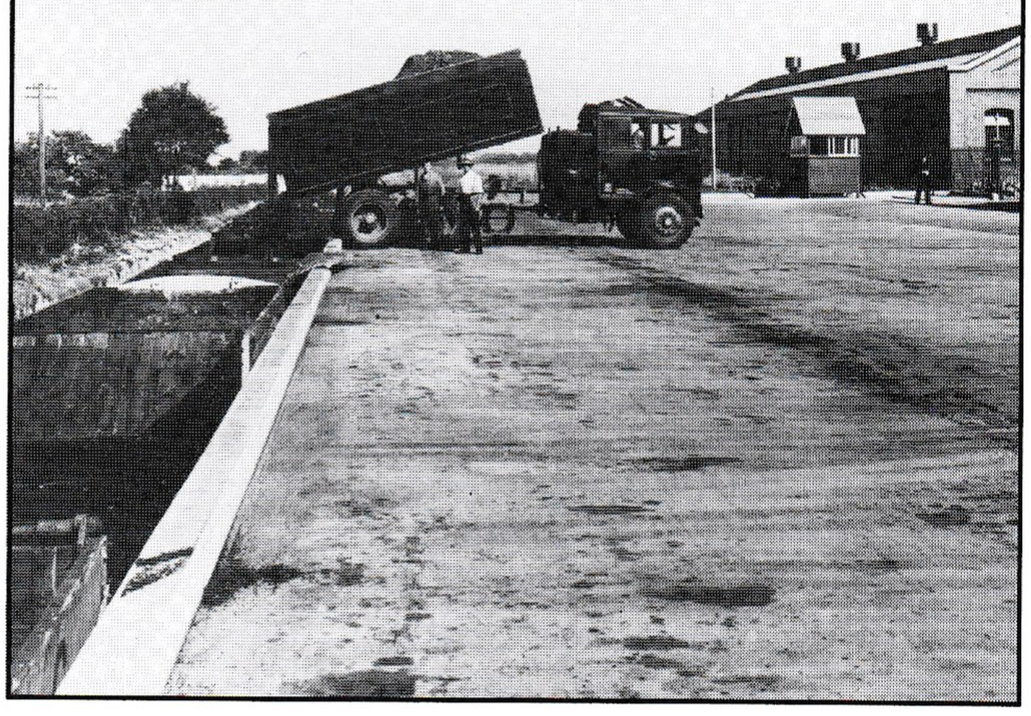
The railways made an important contribution to the increasingly-sophisticated nature of naval vessels, for whereas in the days of the wooden-hulled, sail navy ships could be built almost entirely from components fabricated in the dockyard, the necessary timber and other supplies being delivered directly by sea, this could not be achieved when warships became metal-hulled, armour-plated, powered by steam engines and armed with huge, rifled artillery pieces. Towards the end of the century, searchlights were standard equipment, as were radio transmitters and advanced navigational aids. Such elements were made by specialist manufacturers throughout the country and could most expeditiously be delivered to the yard by rail. The first line into the dockyard was opened in 1849, passing Commercial Road via a level crossing, and a second branch from the harbour station was completed in 1878, some 25 miles of track eventually being laid down in the dockyard itself.[92] The present-day Whale Island in fact owes its form to the spoil from the dockyard extension of 1864-76 being dumped by means of a railway line run across Fountain Lake. In the inter-war period there was a twice-daily service from Fratton goods yard, often including gun carriage wagons, while less frequently wagons supplied Gunwharf with guns and ordnance stores by means of a dedicated branch line opened in 1876. The Hilsea ordnance depot was similarly served by sidings from the main line, but the value of the link accorded the Hilsea gasworks, built in 1904, was less unequivocal, for one of the more memorable features of the 1930s for many local residents was the fleet of Foden lorries that used to convey coal from Flathouse Quay to the gasworks. Similarly the 20-wagon coal train which would inch between Fratton and the town goods siding with fuel for the electric power station at the Camber, a shunter perched atop the leading wagon brandishing green and red flags as signals for the pushing locomotive, did not represent a railway monopoly, for coal was also shipped in at the Camber itself.[93] Furthermore, rail-borne coal had to be transported onwards by road.

Notwithstanding the regular appearance of colliers at Flathouse and the Camber, important coal yards existed at the town station and, after 1936, at Fratton. There local coal merchants would bag their supplies from open-sided wagons, which were sometimes their own property, the railway simply providing haulage from colliery to siding. A pristine example of an eight-ton wagon built by the Gloucester Carriage and Wagon Co in 1898 for the Portsmouth merchant Jeram, for use on the LBSCR system, is exhibited by Mitchell and Smith.[94] Another basic material whose supply became easier and price lower consequent upon the arrival of the railway was straw, the demand for which in the era of horse-drawn vehicles was

Local councillors observing the rotary tipper during their visit to Hilsea gasworks on 1 June 1926. The locomotive is Sir John Baker.
(PMRS)

Durham coal brought by sea to Flathouse Quay being tipped into rail wagons at Hilsea gasworks for delivery to the retorts, 1933.
(PMRS)





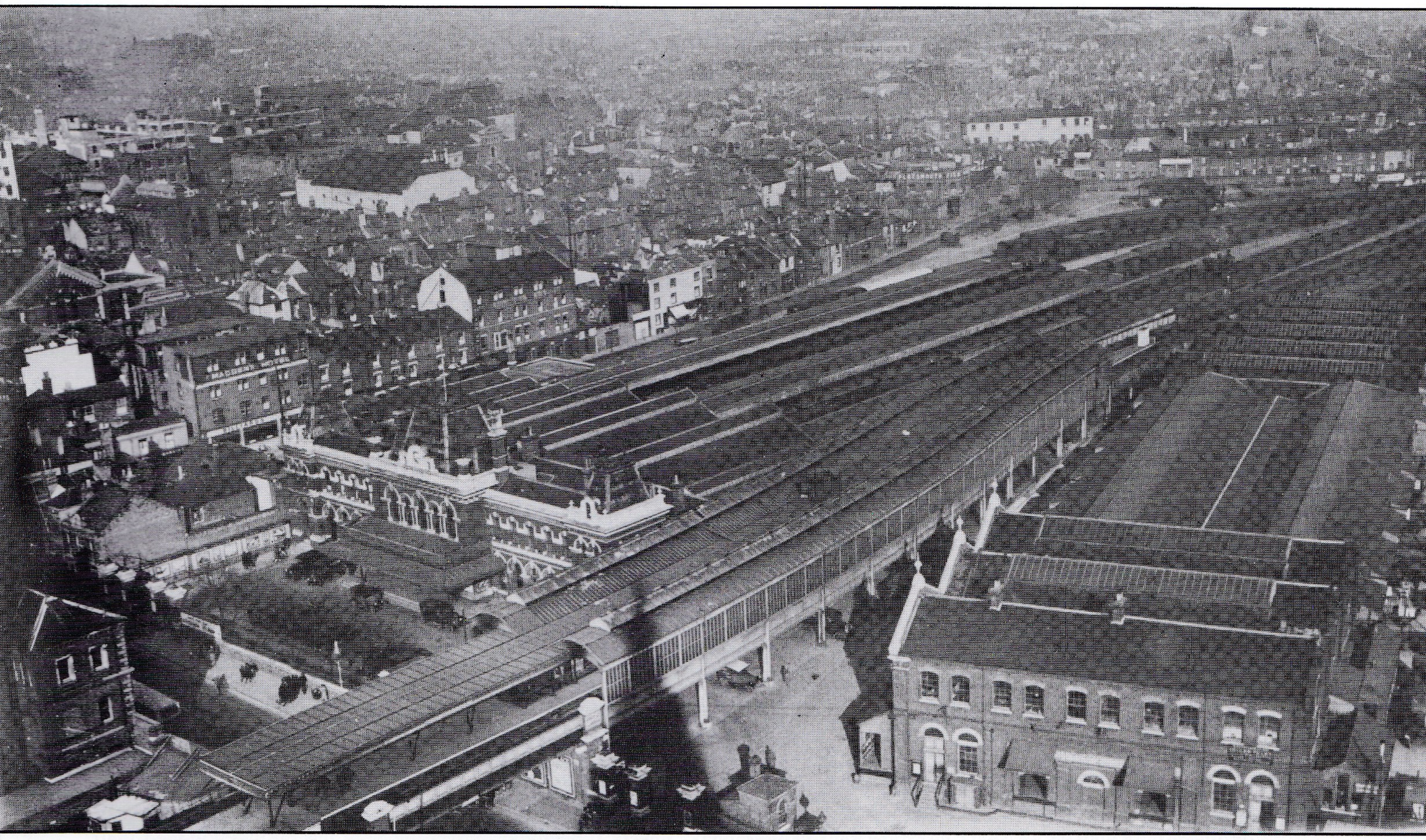
An advert for a coal merchant painted on a house in Talbot Rd, Fratton, photographed in 1971.
(Photo Deane Clark)

prodigious. To offset its low density, straw would be piled high and compressed by tarpaulins secured by ropes; there was every incentive to overload wagons, causing the tarpaulins to be damaged through collision with lineside structures; needless to say strict instructions were issued on the matter.[95]

The railway also enabled Portsmouth's non-dockyard manufacturing sector, albeit small, to penetrate national markets in a way previously impossible, allowing the town to become a specialist producer itself. Two industries followed this path. By virtue of its low value-to-weight relationship beer could not profitably be moved long distances by road. The railways changed this, bringing new opportunities for good beers: the rapid expansion of Long's brewery in the second half of the century was underpinned by the early recognition by Charles E B Long of the market potential for bottled beer, eminently suited to transport by rail, and which was sold as far away as Cardiff, Birmingham and Norwich.[96] Portsmouth brewers did not have it entirely their own way, for the special tariffs offered by the Midland Railway encouraged the Burton firm of Marston Thompson and Evershed to penetrate Portsmouth's pubs.[97] A second industry to profit from the new situation was corset manufacture. The activity existed in the days of the road carrier, but it was the railway that helped to secure new markets. Many small workshops were established in Portsmouth by London entrepreneurs who could use the railway network to effect distribution, as indeed did the much larger corset factories whose output was such that Portsmouth came to be associated with corsets as Kidderminster with carpets and Luton with hats. As early as the 1860s the firm of Chilcot, almost next to the station in Surrey Street, was selling corsets in Belgium, Paris, New York and Chicago as distribution costs fell. To assist the process of expansion Chilcot set up an agency in London in 1852, as did Izod & Co in 1860.[98] It would be erroneous, however, to assume that the railways captured the entirety of freight traffic, for over short distances and between towns lacking a railway station, road carriers possessed advantages. Horse-drawn carts were still delivering goods in 1900 from Portsmouth to an arc of towns and villages from Emsworth in the east, to Catherington, Finchdean, Rowlands Castle and Petersfield in the north, and to Fareham and Titchfield in the west.[99] Within this network, carrier services were based in the small communities themselves; the firm of Colyer's at Cosham is such an instance.

Unquestionably the changes described generated employment, but at least as important to social life was the change engendered in the diet of the population, since a range of products could now be brought from all regions of the country. Milk traffic increased notably in the 1880s as the advantages of the wetter areas of England and Wales asserted themselves over the cramped urban cowsheds. Until the use of ice as a preservative, for most people the only fish available was salted or pickled herring, but from the 1860s deliveries of cheap cod from Grimsby and Hull led to the widespread emergence of new fishmongers, and of that vital element of working-class life, the fish and chip shop.[100] Deliveries were effected daily to a fish dock at the town station, and the town council was pleased to note in 1896 that a rearrangement of goods timetables had

Portsmouth station and goods depot, c.1925.
(Lens of Sutton)



resulted in a much shorter journey time, and consequently fresher fish, from Grimsby. This prompted six fish merchants to thank the council for its persuasive powers over the railway.[101] Fish merchants would gather at the fish dock at 4.30 am to collect their consignments, but the facility brought its own problems for not only was the roadway found to be wanting in 1904 by the Medical Officer of Health, but also the strong smell of fish and fish washings in pools on the road were seen to constitute a public nuisance.[102]

The use of the railway to bring live cattle to Portsmouth made meat more plentiful; the animals were driven from the station through the streets to the butchers' slaughterhouses where they were killed to provide a regular supply of fresh meat. When refrigerated wagons were introduced, meat prices fell even more since it was possible to take delivery of meat from cattle imported at very competitive prices from America, slaughtered at ports like Birkenhead, whence it was distributed by train. In 1934 Australian lamb began to appear in the chain of ten butcher's shops owned by George Cooper; supplies were brought to Portsmouth in a three-and-half ton insulated container mounted on a flat wagon, the container then being simply craned on to a horse-drawn cart, thereby reducing the handling charge at the goods depot.[103] By effecting links with specialist fruit growing areas which emerged in the nineteenth century, the railways enabled Portmuthians to eat Kentish apples, West Riding rhubarb, soft fruit from the Vale of Evesham and, in season, strawberries from Swanwick and Bursledon. In addition, grocers' shops were able quite substantially to diversify the range of goods on offer, and indeed the dependence of such retailing on rail-borne supplies caused the Portsmouth Grocers' Association to complain in 1899 of delay in deliveries from the goods depot.[104] It was only a relatively short step to the emergence of chain stores outside the station (W H Smith being the first) such as Timothy White, a Portsmouth firm, and Home and Colonial in Commercial Road, and of department stores typified by the Landport Drapery Bazaar and Handleys, opened in Southsea in 1867.[105] Exhibiting commendable enterprise another chain store, the Portsea Island Mutual Cooperative Society, in the 1930s conceived the idea of a novel form of advertising through the use of three converted railway carriages, labelled 'Pimco Show Train', as a mobile exhibition of its wares visiting stations in the region.[106] Through a different route the railway even diversified the stock of market stalls, a model train set being depicted for sale in Ubsdell's painting, *The Abolition of the Free Mart Fair, 22 July 1847.*[107] It is no exaggeration to say that without the railway these developments could not have occurred, and that the quality of life would have suffered in consequence.

It is generally believed that the apogee of freight traffic occurred immediately prior to the First World War, for despite the introduction of containers for bulk loads to factories, shops and for household removals by firms such as Pickford and Curtiss, there was increasing competition from road transport, initially from steam wagons and later from motor vehicles.[108] Such conveyances could effect door-to-door delivery, thus avoiding the need for cumbersome and costly handling at railway freight depots. As part of a strategy to retain goods traffic, the SR established a system of freight accounts for the benefit of customers who included Portsmouth coal merchants, builders, a furniture manufacturer, a wine merchant, fruit suppliers and Havacone, the local maker of ice cream cones.[109] However, the construction of arterial roads and more powerful and reliable lorries in the inter-war years sealed the long-term fate of much of the railway's goods traffic. Indeed by 1939 Timothy White's was employing lorries to convey stock from its Portsmouth depot to stores in south-east England.[110] It was ironic therefore that the campaign to relocate the goods depot from town station, which had its origins in 1897 when proposals were tabled by the Joint Railway Committee to move milk, fish and cattle traffic to Fratton, and later supported by the town council, should have come to fruition in 1936, long after contraction had begun.[111] At least the inordinate congestion was reduced at the entrance to the goods depot, inappropriately opposite the Town Hall in Commercial Road, already the busiest thoroughfare in the city.

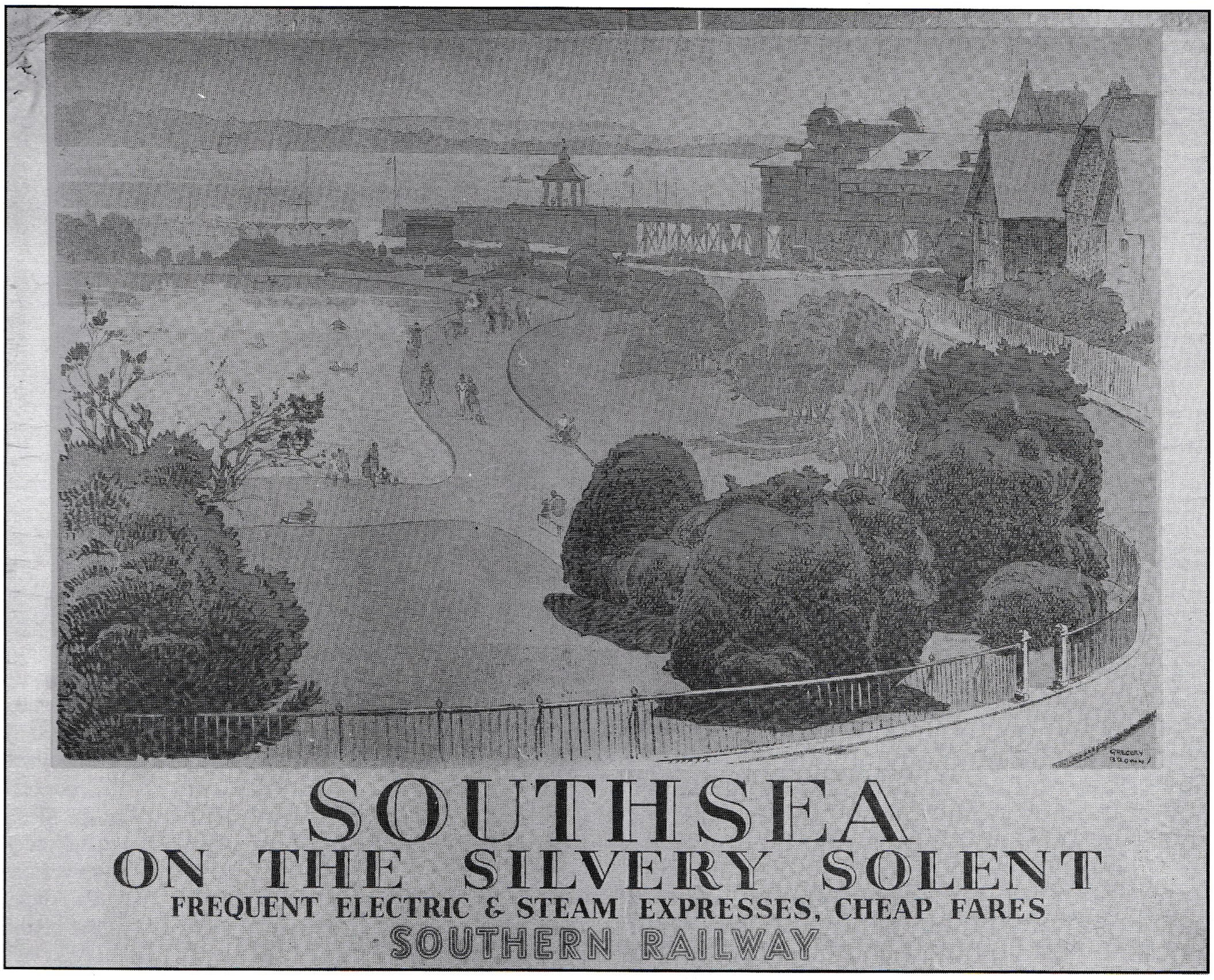
Excursion and Ceremonial Traffic

The role of Southsea as a respectable middle-class resort, retirement and residential area flourished with the arrival of the railway, for until the 1870s the growth of tourism was largely fuelled by the middle classes, for whom respectability was a main consideration.[112] Between 1841 and 1881 the proportion of white collar workers in the working population rose from six to ten per cent: they had two weeks' holiday, their children travelled at half fare, and they were heavily concentrated in the capital, from which Portsmouth was well within striking distance.[113] The railway was cheap, fast, relatively comfortable and would accept mountains of luggage without demur. It did not create tourism, but it was a key factor in the expansion of an activity that had by the end of the century come to be enjoyed by the working class, aided by the Bank Holidays Act of 1871 which provided for holidays with pay. Holiday traffic, however, did not make the maximum use of track, stations and rolling stock, which had to be paid for whether used or not; such simple economics gave rise to excursion trains for one-off events. As Geoffrey Best writes of the years between 1851 and 1875, 'Railways were the great novelty of our period'.[114] Excursions were socially useful for they at least allowed the poorer people some respite from a drab working existence; they were the precursor of the holiday proper. Almost certainly the first excursion from Portsmouth was that offered by the LSWR to the Great Exhibition in 1851. The fares were modest: 1¼d, ld, and ½d a mile for the three classes respectively. And establishing a precedent for the future, no luggage was permitted, while the tickets were valid only for the 6 am from Portsmouth and the 7 pm from Waterloo.[115]

A series of excursions specifically involving Portmuthians owed their origin to an initiative within the dockyard, where, after the example of Thomas Cook, in 1883 an Excursion Committee was formed, running a trip in conjunction with the LBSCR to the Fisheries Exhibition in London.[116] Some 4,500 dockyardmen, their families and friends made the journey in eight trains, many returning the following day on payment of 1s supplement.[117] The following year excursions were arranged to Winchester, London, Plymouth and Birmingham; the latter was very competitively priced at ¼d a mile. Small wonder that the trips, usually run on the queen's birthday, a traditional dockyard holiday, and on bank holidays, to exhibitions and football matches, proved popular. In 1896 some 30,604 tickets were sold and doubtless horizons widened. There are hints that the occasions may not have been noted for their sobriety: an internal railway working instruction regarding a Winchester excursion requested 'Portsmouth to provide the train, including as many lavatory thirds as possible'. After the war excursions were resumed and included trips to the British Empire Exhibitions in 1924 and 1925, but interest fell away and they ceased in 1935.[118] More modest were excursions put on for the police, who visited Arundel Castle in 1878, but excursions originating in Portsmouth were in fact surprisingly frequent, given the town's holiday function.[119] The programme for the summer of 1887 included trips to Oxford, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester,[120] but this was nothing compared with the single day of Saturday 7 July 1906 when no less than 30 excursions were scheduled, of which 25 departed between 7.30 and 10.30 am; during this time only four normal services were timetabled, indicating how the railways judged their profitability. Destinations were as far afield as Birmingham, Bristol and Exeter, few if any being holiday resorts.[121] Seeking to put their ferries to good use, the railways offered what they termed 'sea trips' to Ryde, Isle of Wight, offering an option of visiting any station of the island for a flat fare of 2s 6d third class in 1913. Flat fares were seldom employed by the railways, ever conscious of distance between stations, but in this instance there was a likely saving in clerical costs; however, they ceased to exist under the aegis of the SR.[122] The upturn in the fortunes of Portsmouth Football Club consequent upon their promotion to the first division in 1927 provided incentive for supporters' travel, although only a miserly 3,750 tickets were allocated to the club for the 1929 cup final, despite a total attendance at Wembley of 92,570. For Pompey's second cup final appearance in 1934 most of the 7,500 ticket holders travelled by eight special trains, while the club's victory in 1939 was watched by 6,000 rail-borne supporters; a further 1,000, however, reached Wembley by bus.[123]

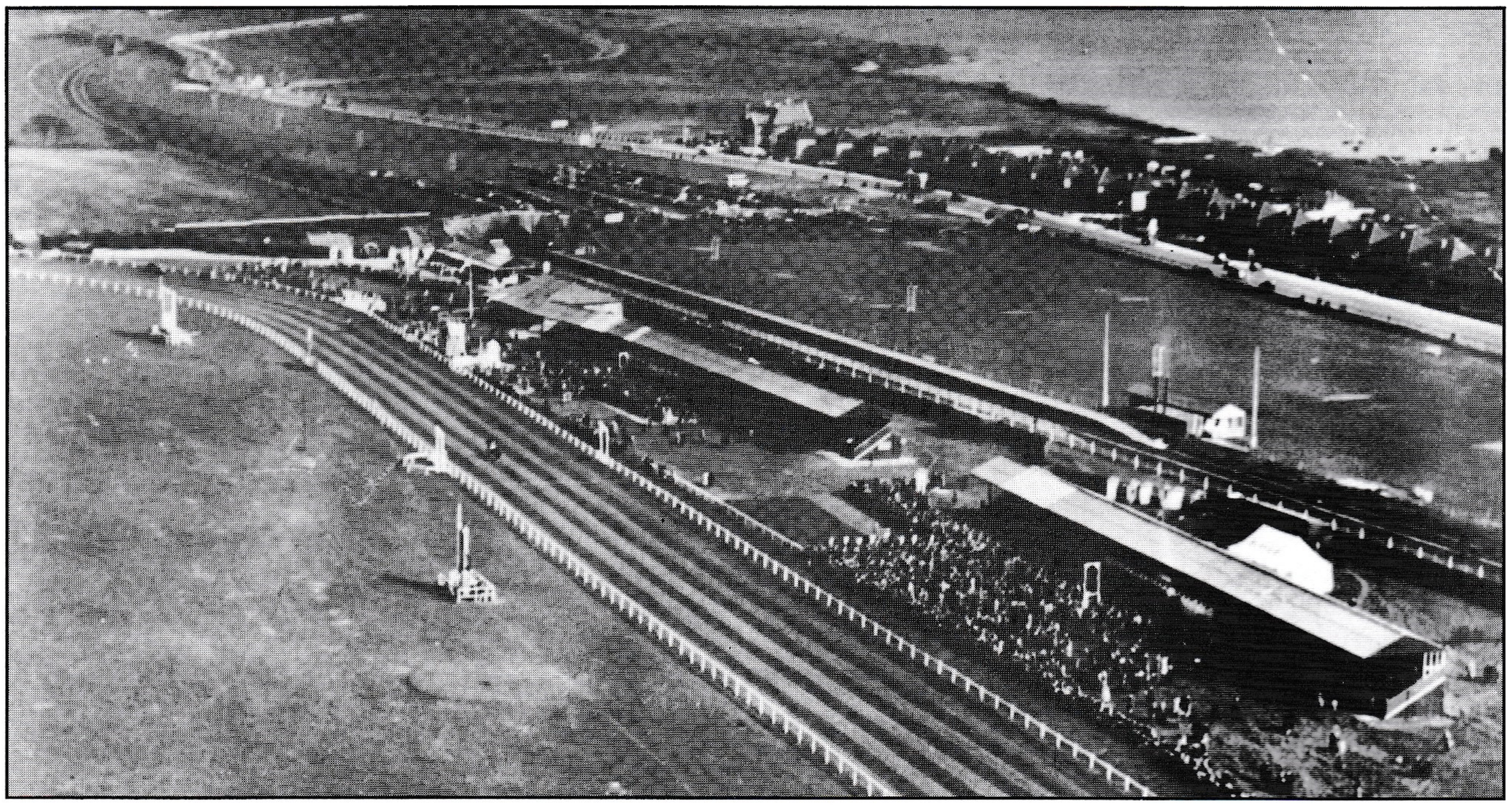
More frequently the railway companies offered excursions from inland places to Portsmouth as a seaside resort and home of the Royal Navy. Exemplifying the point above regarding the use of investment, no sooner had the Portsmouth direct line opened in 1859 than the LSWR ran an excursion from London; obviously understanding the economies of scale, the company

A SR poster of 1939 with Canoe Lake and South Parade Pier to the fore.
(PMRS)



managed to cram 2,000 people into 42 coaches, drawn by three locomotives.[124] The Great Northern Railway ran a trip from Dunstable on 20 June 1891 for a fare of ¼d a mile, children half fare, those under three being carried free. But the rules were strict: passengers leaving the train before Portsmouth were required to pay the full ordinary fare.[125] What was unusual was the absence of class discrimination, a contribution by the railways to the slow process of democratisation. The poster for the Midland Railway excursion on 26 July 1901 from Bedford bore the note that the company's 'illustrated Guide and List of Furnished Lodgings in Farmhouses, Seaside and Country Districts is now ready', suggesting that it was hoped the day trip would encourage subsequent journeys.[126] By facilitating travel for both teams and supporters, the railway contributed greatly to the development of sport on a countrywide scale. Football has been referred to, and cricket also benefited. When the Australians played at the Officers' Recreation Ground in 1882 more than 16,000 spectators were admitted over the three days, many Portmuthians among them enjoying a new form of leisure.[127] It might not have been the seaside, but the attraction of a flutter that drew many punters to Farlington halt on race days after it opened specifically to serve the adjacent racecourse, complete with royal box, in 1891. The track did not reopen after the First World War, but the facility was replicated through the creation of a racecourse at Wymering in 1928, once more supported by a railway halt; it too was closed by a war, in 1939.[128] Doubtless lured by the pleasant environment and space it afforded, the Royal Counties Agricultural Show was held on Southsea Common on eight occasions, that in 1914 being a four-day event attracting 80,000 visitors.[129] The LSWR materially assisted such events by their policy of carrying cattle to agricultural shows free of charge.[130] Similarly, by carrying boats gratis, the Brighton company helped to promote the holding of regattas between south coast rowing clubs; these events were especially popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, the railway recouping its losses from passenger revenue. In this instance the influence of the railway actually infiltrated into the competitions themselves; the regulations required that the length of the boats be 30 feet, a dimension not determined by the rowing clubs but by the

Paulsgrove (Wymering) racecourse with its very convenient railway halt.
(Lens of Sutton)



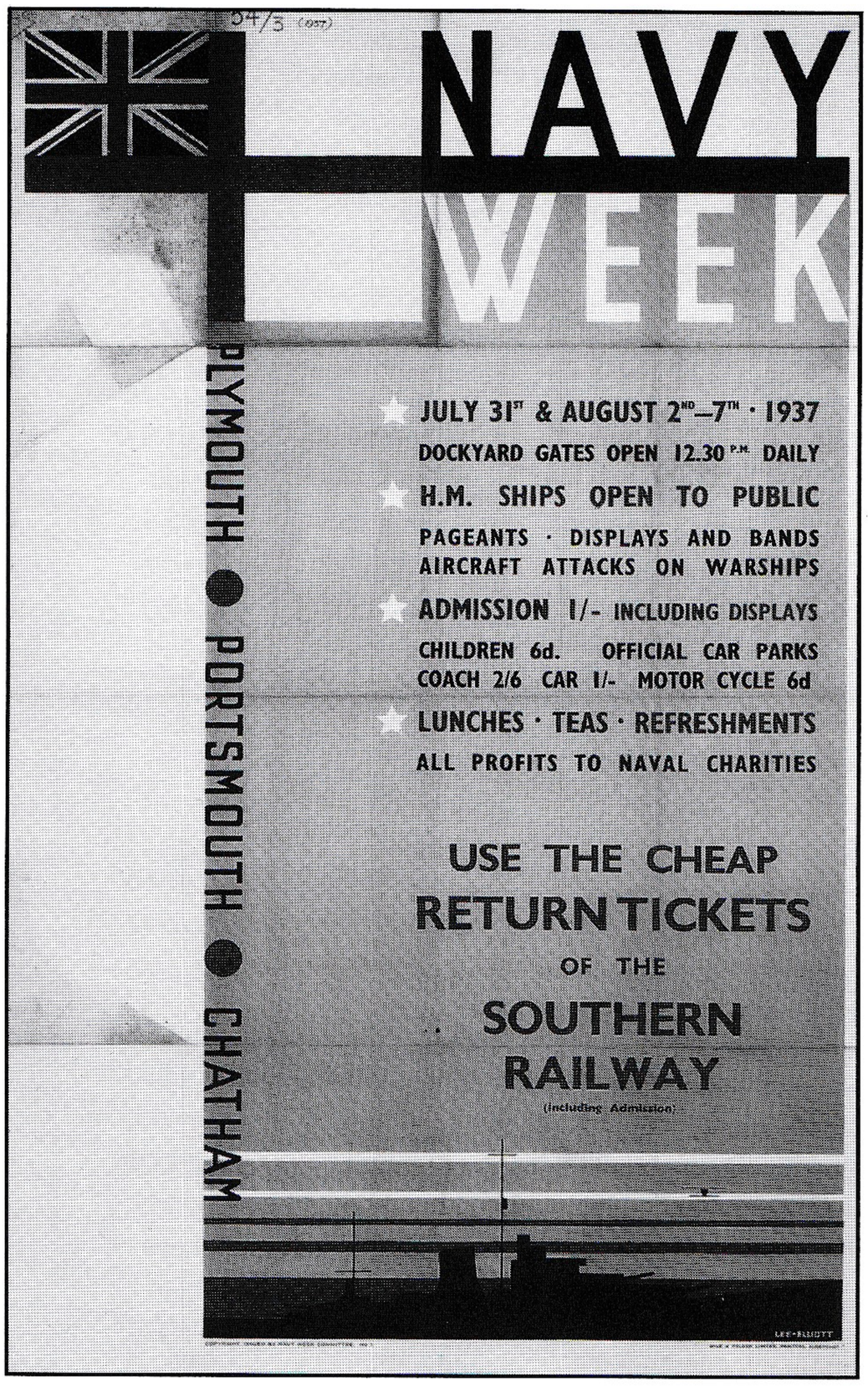
measurements of the flat wagons used to move them.[131] A contribution to society was made in another direction, for in the 1930s the SR ran special trains for Southampton children on outings to the dockyard, Portchester Castle and other places of educational interest.[132] Although hardly an excursion, but certainly an educational trip was J E Barrett's journey to St Luke's School in the 1920s. In the manner of boys, he was always delighted when on icy mornings the steam engine was unable to climb the viaduct to the high-level station at Portsmouth, necessitating a delay until a second locomotive arrived to assist, thus providing him with a cast-iron excuse for missing lessons. He was ordered always to get out at Fratton, but he chose to ignore such pedagogic advice.[133]

During the nineteenth century, before the advent of the motor vehicle, the railways possessed a near monopoly over excursion traffic. The monopoly was not complete since there were always carriages available for hire to small groups: in May 1884 30 dockyard sailmakers and families journied on Messrs Spittle and Taylor's four-horse brakes to Chichester and Goodwood Park, taking tea at the *Richmond Arms*, Waterbeach.[134] It is easy to envisage the agreeable nature of such excursions, but they provided little competition for the railway. The growth of car ownership was relatively slow, although 4,000 were conveyed between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight in 1926, and it was left to motor-coach companies to erode the railways' market.[135] The Southsea Tourist Co used four wheel, solid-rubber-tyred charabancs for excursions immediately prior to the First World War, but it was in the inter-war period that competition intensified as firms like Brickwood and many pubs organised charabanc outings, and Southdown Motor Services had become large enough to be able to supply 20 coaches for a Portsea Island Mutual Cooperative Society trip to Wickham in 1933.[136] The signs were sufficiently ominous for SR to enter into agreements with bus companies like Southdown and Sussex and East Hants, but the trend was not in their favour since they could not offer the flexibility the public wanted.[137] Air travel was also perceived as a threat. The Portsmouth, Southsea and IOW Aviation Co began services in 1932, causing the SR to collaborate with the other three main-line railway companies to form Railway Air Services in 1934, operating services to Croydon, Southampton and the Isle of Wight.[138] But air travel was expensive and well beyond the reach of most of the travelling public.

Aircraft, on the other hand, exercised a fascination of the kind engendered by the Dreadnought battleships thirty years previously, and the Schneider Trophy seaplane races held at Southsea captured widespread interest. No less than half-a-million spectators were anticipated at the second contest, which took place on 7 September 1929, and as a sign of the changing times 20,000 car parking places were provided on Southsea Common. But most people did come by train, and the SR suspended normal services for the day, some 250 special trains leaving Waterloo and Victoria. The *Evening News* remarked that although the crowd was the largest ever seen in Portsmouth, it was also the most orderly; perhaps the fare of ld a mile charged by the railway acted as a social filter.[139] Since the aircraft participating represented state-of-the-art technology, they excited more than the interest of the general public: indeed Southsea Castle was used as a viewing platform by officials and navy, army and air force guests. Portsmouth was no stranger to this duty, having become accustomed to hosting royalty and dignitaries throughout the railway age.

Because they were public spectacles presenting the populace with the possibility of actually seeing the queen, fleet reviews

Poster for Navy Week, 1937, printed in red, white and blue.
(National Railway Museum/Science & Society Picture Library)

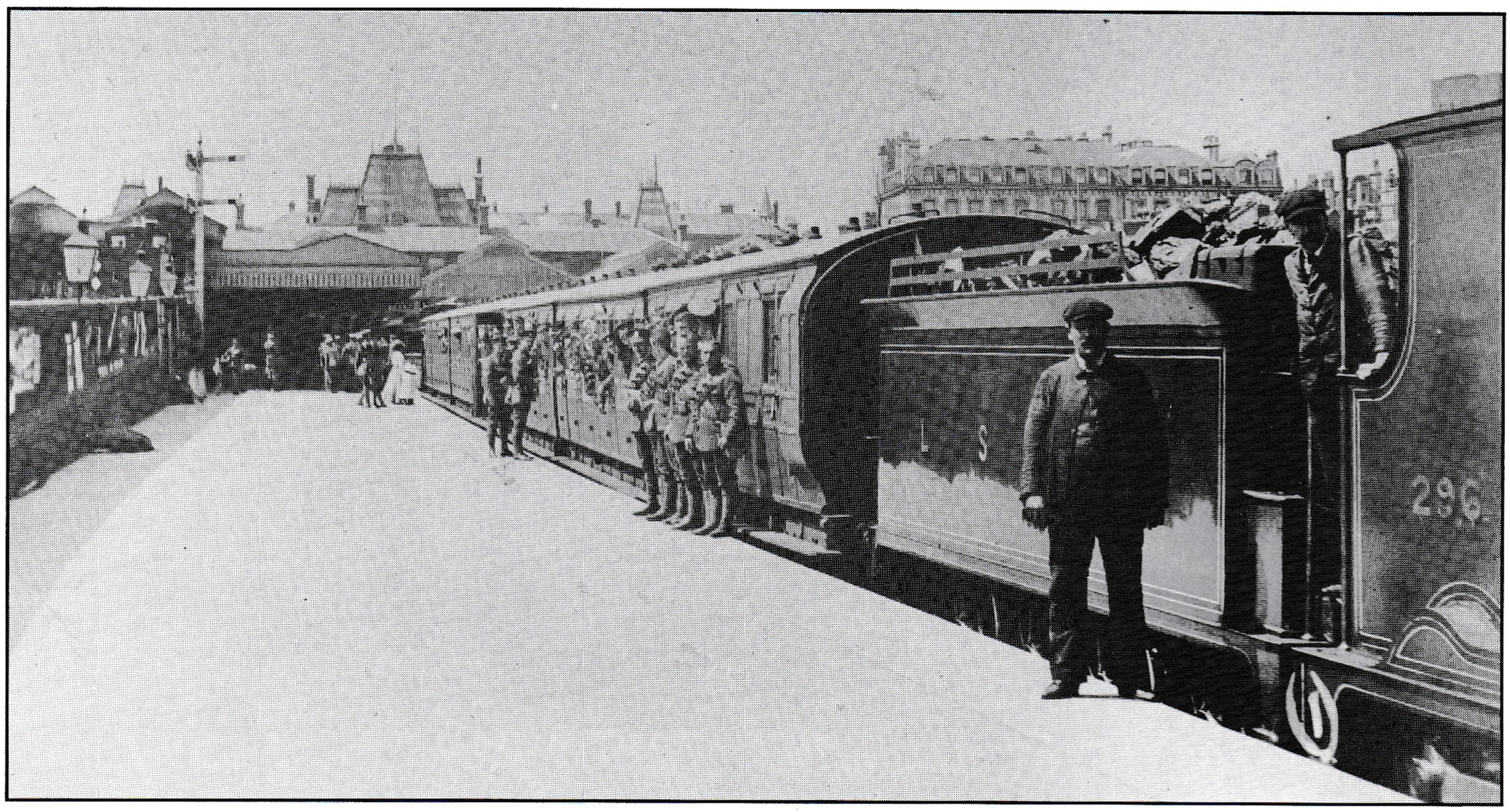


came to be highly popular events during the second half of the nineteenth century, the numbers attending in large part deriving from the existence of the railway. The review as an event predated the railway, that in 1842 being described as 'a small affair', while that three years later comprised only nine vessels.[140] The 1853 review, however, was an event of altogether different proportions, with 25 ships on display for the benefit of the Royal Family, peers, MPs, Ministers of the Crown, members of the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished naval and army officers, foreign royalty and eminent civilians; for the first time the press was invited.[141] Accommodation facilities did not match those of the railway, and the local historian Gates noted that 'the streets were crowded with hapless visitors in search of a bed'.[142] The 'Peace Review' celebrating the end of the Crimean War in 1856 involved no fewer than 240 ships, while the Admiralty alone invited 5,075 guests to Portsmouth in conjunction with the LSWR. Inevitably problems arose in moving such large numbers, but the presence of the press and so many dignitaries ensured that the shortcomings of the London and South Western did not go undisclosed. The Prime Minister Lord Palmerston was unable to find a seat and was ejected from a carriage by a policeman who thought he was trying to board without a ticket; in the scramble for seats a bishop was obliged to travel third class; and worse still a journalist was caused to travel second class in the company of a slightly inebriated Irish lady, reduced 'to that lower form of animal organization known as the disgusted excursionist'. A train loaded with 670 MPs and their families failed at Woking, a shortage of replacement engines occasioning considerable delay. The event, involving the dispatch of 867 carriages from Waterloo, nevertheless indicated what large numbers could be moved and how much society had already become dependent on this form of transport.[143]

The railways formed the pivot of all subsequent fleet reviews; that in 1887 celebrating the 50th year of Queen Victoria's rule was a substantial ceremony supported by about 30 special trains, those carrying MPs and some of the Admiralty ticket holders being provided by the LBSCR.[144] Two years later a review in honour of Kaiser Wilhelm III saw the railways busy once more, but hardly on the scale of the queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Some 1,365 Portsmouth naval personnel were conveyed to London by the Brighton company to participate in the Jubilee procession, then the following Saturday polite society assembled in Portsmouth for the fleet review.[145] The resources of the railway companies were 'severely strained', as was the patience of several thousand trippers from London, who, arriving to view the fleet at Spithead the day after the official review, found the boats promised by the LBSCR nowhere to be seen. The ensuing riot had to be broken up by the police.[146] A more unfortunate event was one which generated no visitor traffic, and ultimately did not concern Portsmouth, namely the queen's funeral train which travelled on 2 February 1901 to London Victoria from Clarence Yard, Gosport, via Cosham. It had originally been planned for the train to depart from the dockyard. Rumour had it that the Her Majesty was disenchanted with Portsmouth consequent upon an anti-German banner being displayed during a visit, and that her wishes were respected.[147] The death of the queen did not disturb the practice of holding fleet reviews, which were mounted in 1911 to mark the coronation of King George V, in 1912, 1914, 1924, 1935, when the king and entourage detrained at Cosham travelling onward through the streets of the city by car, and finally in 1937 as part of King George VI's coronation celebrations.

The fleet reviews were only one, albeit important, aspect of the railways' ceremonial work, for there was constant demand for special trains to convey visiting dignitaries in the manner to which they were accustomed. Taking 1907 as an example, there were visits from colonial premiers in May, the King and Queen of Denmark in June, Edward VII in August, and Kaiser Wilhelm in November.[148] For these occasions trains were resplendent, public relations extending as far as locomotive names. In support of the *entente cordiale* with France, the railway companies were required to take appropriate action: the locomotive *Empress* became *La France* for the day in 1906, and an unnamed engine acquired the same title for the visit of the French President, Raymond Poincaré, in 1913.[149] These visits barely touched the town's people, but the almost feudal

Troops at Portsmouth low level station during the First World War.
(Lens of Sutton)



respect they engendered was certainly a commentary on contemporary social life. So too was the frequent arrival by train from London of 'painted ladies', to use one of the terms popularly applied to them, attracted by the potential custom of foreign ships' crews showing the flag in Portsmouth.

Government and Wartime Traffic

In a great naval port and garrison town, the movement of sailors, soldiers, stores and equipment was routine business for the railways. It was estimated in 1872, for example, that some 38,000 servicemen a year were likely to use the harbour station once it opened in 1879.[150] From time to time, however, traffic was prompted by national emergencies and changes in government policy. Soldiers embarking for the Crimea in 1854 would have arrived in Portsmouth by train, while the remnants of the once proud force on its return in 1856 would have departed similarly after inspection by the queen.[151] Government foreign policy also dictated the size of dockyards, and in the late 1860s, the international situation being perceived as stable, contraction was effected. As a sop to the discharged dockyardmen and their families, the Admiralty provided a troopship enabling them to emigrate to Canada, should they so wish; on 20 April 1869 some 216 emigrants from Woolwich arrived to join 175 from Portsmouth. Their train comprised six carriages and three luggage vans, indicative of the quantity of belongings being taken, the whole being organised with military precision by Captain Phipps, a member of the Woolwich Relief Committee.[152] At least the group was able to travel directly to their ship by means of the dockyard branch line.' A second larger group departed similarly on 1 May the same year.[153] Admiralty policy on dockyard employment was largely responsible for a second wave of emigration by Portmuthians pessimistic about their future in the town. A new life beckoned in Argentina and on 2 and 12 March 1889 two groups totalling 850 left for London from the town station amid scenes more reminiscent of a carnival than a farewell.[154] Disillusioned by opportunities in a very different culture, many were later to return.[155]

The railways facilitated the embarkation of troops for the Boer War, both in the normal way and through the use of space in goods sidings as holding areas, as occurred at Cosham.[156] In the very much larger and protracted operations of the First World War, troops, horses, guns, vehicles and later tanks were frequent sights, while fleet ammunition trains arrived in the dockyard on almost a daily basis. Extensive sidings were built at Fratton to accommodate this additional traffic, while some normal services were cancelled, especially from 1917; by 1918 Portsmouth possessed no fast and only one semi-fast train to London.[157] Day and half-day excursions were cancelled 'in consequence of the imperative requirements of the Military Authorities', and the opportunity was taken to close the Southsea branch, although this can hardly have led to much inconvenience since the tramways had usurped its function.[158] If nothing else, from the withdrawal of the service emerged a comment on the level of literacy among railway staff, for shortly after the outbreak of war a notice appeared at Fratton station announcing 'No Moor Tranes to East Southsea. Fishal'.[159] Special trains were frequent, their routes depending on the exigencies of the services; between 1917 and 1919 one such ran daily from Portsmouth to Euston, where personnel caught the Naval Special to Thurso, one of the bases of the Grand Fleet.[160] Ferry services to the Isle of Wight suffered through the requisitioning in 1916 of four ships for minesweeping, while evening sailings were required to use Clarence Pier owing to the closure of Portsmouth Harbour during the hours of darkness.[161] It took a little time for the war economy

to be wound up, and it was not until 1921 that excursion trains were resumed.[162]

Less than 20 years later the country was once again on a war footing. Such had been the advances in aircraft technology, coupled with the strength of the Luftwaffe, that a German bomber assault of enormous proportions was feared, and plans for the immediate evacuation of schoolchildren were activated in September 1939. Some thousand children from George Street School took part in a trial run, involving a journey from the town to the harbour station, and then on to the Isle of Wight. The journey was free but they were required to carry an enamel mug, plate and of course a gas mask in addition to other essentials. Subsequently more than 12,000 children, mothers and helpers were moved by rail to safe destinations including the New Forest and towns like Salisbury, which housed children from Cosham; children and teachers from Bramble Road and Reginald Road schools were welcomed at the Winter Gardens at Ventnor, Isle of Wight.[163] There are conflicting reports of the number of trains employed in the exercise, but somewhere between 145 and 172 conveyed evacuees from Portsmouth, Gosport and Southampton during September 1939.[164] However successfully it was managed, in retrospect the evacuation was thought not to have been entirely necessary.

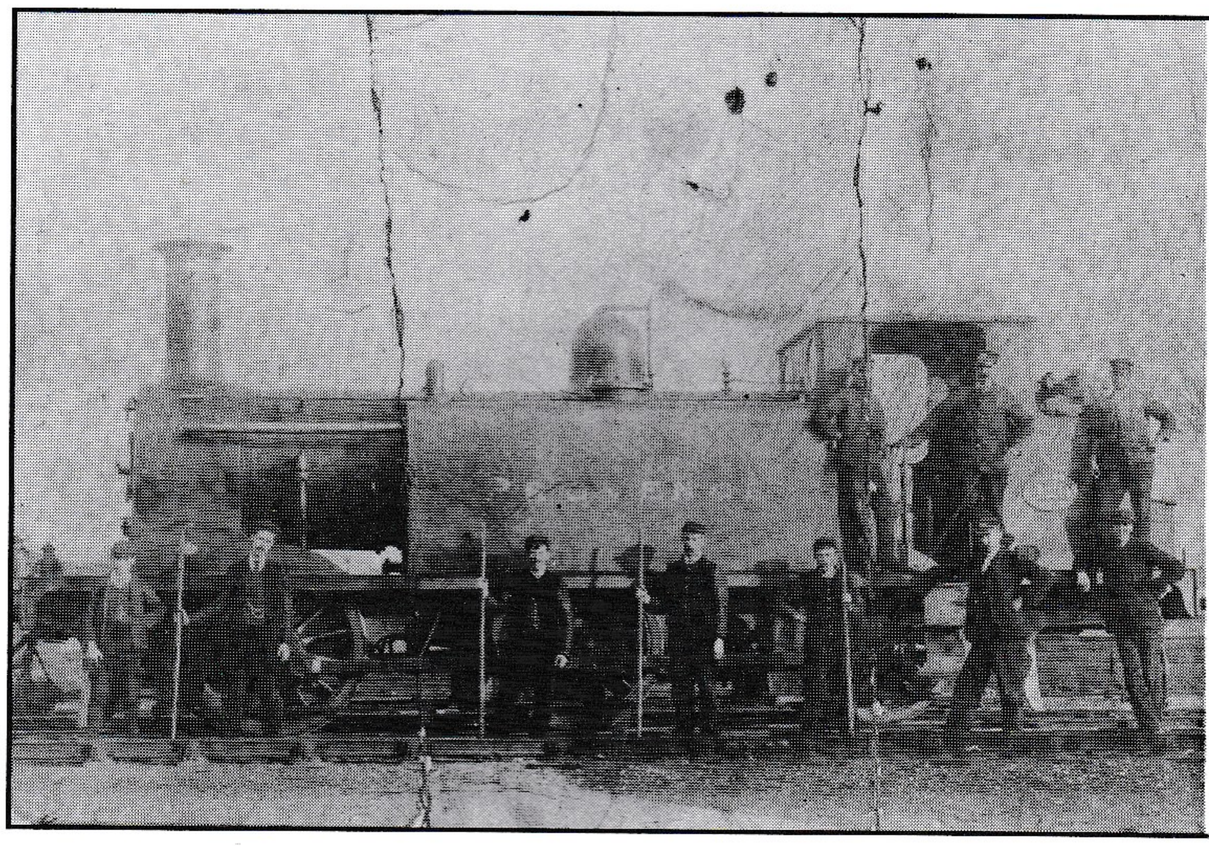
Following the practice introduced during the First World War, passenger services were reduced. The public was urged to think twice about travelling by means of a poster campaign asking 'Is Your Journey Really Necessary?', and restaurant cars were withdrawn in May 1942. The Portsmouth direct services, however, suffered only a modest increase in journey time, from 90 to 102 minutes.[165] In place of sepia-hued photographs of stately hotels run by the railways there appeared in carriages notices suggesting that 'Dangerous Talk Costs Lives', giving rise to many a schoolboy debate on the definition of 'dangerous'. The railway experienced extensive bomb damage, recounted elsewhere by Course and Darwin.[166] There were acts of bravery by engine crews near Hilsea gasworks, when on 4 May 1941 a driver, fireman and guard passed within 10 feet of an unexploded bomb at the harbour station to ensure that Sunday newspapers reached the Isle of Wight, and in 1940 all ranks of railway staff joined the Local Defence Volunteers, later the Home Guard.[167] A sense of duty pervaded everything: station staff were ordered to retrieve tickets which were scattered about the town station following a land mine explosion in January 1941, since it was feared that they might be used for unauthorised travel.[168] More positively, and of lasting benefit, was the construction of a station at Hilsea in 1941 for the benefit of those working in the nearby factories engaged in what was known as 'the war effort'. And as part of the slow process of gender equality, women were recruited as guards, ticket collectors, porters and cleaners.[169]

Station Facilities and Work on the Railways

Much maligned at the present time, facilities at important stations in Victorian Britain were symptomatic of the improvement of the quality of life, and, despite complaints, resembled those of modest hotels. On the other hand the first town station, 1847-66, was hardly outstanding, and conceivably neither were its facilities. Fay remarks that it was a 'miserable structure' with its booking office and waiting room made of wooden boards lined with canvas.[170] The second, existing, building, however, a fine example of high Victorian eclectic architecture and a credit to today's Commercial Road with its drab functionalism, could offer much to the travelling public. Immediately inside the entrance was the booking hall where nine positions were set in a semi-circle fronted with wooden panelling from floor to ceiling; it is possible, however, that segregation existing with regard to the class of ticket being purchased. The refreshment room at all three Portsmouth stations boasted a spirit licence issued in favour of a franchisee, and a variety of food from hot meals and soup to a plate of cold meat and bread which could be had for 7d at the town station in 1867.[171] Writing in 1869 Anthony Trollope likened the railway sandwich to a 'whited sepulchre - fair enough outside, but so meagre, poor and spiritless within', but this may not have been a general opinion.[172] Waiting rooms observed the social niceties of the time, first- and second-class ladies having their own premises, as did gentlemen of similar standing in the general waiting room, while the third-class accommodation recognised no gender distinction. That the first- and second-class ladies waiting room was the same size as the room for all third-class passengers, who formed the bulk of the traffic, at Southsea Station is also a comment on contemporary social priorities.[173] A telegraph office for the use of the general public existed at the first town station, and by 1903 the Brighton company timetable proclaimed that there was such a facility at all their stations.[174] Pillar and wall letter boxes were standard by the end of the century, as were public telephones by 1905, the railway receiving 45 per cent of the revenue from their use.[175]

Convenient though they were, cloakrooms, as they were originally termed in place of the current and prosaic 'left luggage office', were regarded by the railways as a source of income. The expected return from the cloakroom at the planned harbour station was £100 per annum, which although only half that of the anticipated rent from the refreshment room, was useful additional revenue.[176] Cloakroom tariffs inform our understanding of early twentieth-century life. For hucksters and packmen, that is hawkers or pedlars, to be identified they must have been relatively frequent passengers: their luggage was rated at 3d if reclaimed the same or the next day. Perhaps the number of itinerant musicians caused street pianos, violincellos and bass viols to be listed among 17 items charged 6d, as were bath-chairs; a harmonium, not an object it is easy now to envisage appearing too often on train journeys, cost 1s, while a motor cycle and sidecar was rated at 1s 3d, despite its purpose being to carry rather than be carried in a train.[177] The town station was also furnished with a parcels office, graced with an awning over the pavement in Station Street.[178] Given that non-corridor trains were the rule during the nineteenth century, and common thereafter, station toilets were a very necessary facility; however, the railway companies seem to have misjudged their popularity, and it was left to the town council to press the Joint Committee to build a toilet for ladies

An LBSCR shunting engine, Provence, and team, thought to include Mr Turton's grandfather.
(PMRS)



on the arrival platform at the harbour station, that on the departure side being deemed a little too distant.[179] Toilets seem to have been indifferently attended to, for in 1904 the Medical Officer of Health declared that both the urinals and water closets at the town station, where they occupied a much larger space than they do today, were in a filthy condition, and a 14-day notice was served on the railway, which was slow to undertake improvement.[180] The presence of the W H Smith bookstall has already been noted; less important were other forms of retailing, but which do seem to have been specific to railway stations, namely, the ungainly metal slot-machines from which chocolate bars and cigarettes could be had. Similar in form were machines dispensing platform tickets. Not specific to stations, but ever present, were enamel advertising plates for such as Wright's Coal Tar Soap, Lifebuoy Soap, Bisto and Bovril, while footbridge stair risers seem to have been extensively favoured by the manufacturers of Virol. Fascinating cameos of contemporary society they may have been, stations by the end of the century were somewhat down-at-heel and by 1897 the town councillors were agreed that provision at both town and Fratton stations was insufficient, even though the latter had been opened only twelve years previously.[181] The Joint Committee responded to this with rebuilding during the Edwardian period.

The virtues of punctuality, order and deference were particularly prized in the Victorian age and after by many large organisations - the dockyard, for instance - but none more so than the railways. Employees were still referred to as servants in the Southern Railway's time, they were subject to tight military style discipline, offences for the previous month being posted in LBSCR messrooms and elsewhere in the 1870s. Clerks could be dismissed for trifling irregularities, porters fined for causing damage to passengers' trunks and ticket collectors cautioned for incivility. Rewards were also listed, particularly in favour of staff noticing cracked wheel tyres, but they were not numerous.[182] Staff reported for duty, and relinquished it only when relieved. Failure to arrive for duty was treated as absence without leave, while unpaid leave required written permission; one LSWR employee who left the company without giving proper notice was sentenced to three weeks' hard labour.[183] The compendium of rules and regulations was a weighty tome, filled with the petty - 'in the interest of time when moving between tracks, carriage cleaners may pass only through 3rd-class compartments' - and the obvious - 'ample time must be taken [by permanent way men] to clear from approaching trains so as to avoid getting flurried when moving away'.[184] The hierarchical structure so beloved of large organisations was writ large, some 39 different grades being recognised in the 1890s.[185] The tradition of son following father was fostered by the railways since it engendered loyalty to the company and pride within the family; fathers and uncles would ask at the station or yard on behalf of younger family seeking work. Michael Turton, who himself worked for British Railways at Portsmouth, recalls that his father joined SR as an axle greaser and progressed to the positions of wheel tapper, porter, shunter, head shunter and finally goods guard, serving in a railway company of the Home Guard during the war. His grandfather had been a shunter at Fratton who lost both legs when he slipped while making up a train and fell under the engine.[186] Albert Wright, who was the last Depot Master at Fratton engine shed, had become a fitter at Fratton in 1933, completing his locomotive maintenance apprenticeship at Eastleigh in 1938. He recalls that at the time Fratton shed lacked electrically powered equipment and that even the air blast for the forge had to be worked manually; as he says 'you had to do the best you could with what you had'. His father had been a cleaner with the South-Eastern and Chatham Railway, becoming a driver with the SR at Brighton and then at Fratton.[187] Mr Wright confirms the existence of rivalry between employees of the two companies long after their amalgamation in 1923; even though they worked together in the Fratton engine shed, colleagues nevertheless still regarded themselves as either Western or Brighton men in the 1930s. And to complicate the social system, even within the same company there was a schism between grades, engine drivers and signalmen each believing in their superiority over the other.

It was inevitable that occasionally differences in opinion would escalate into confrontations between employees and the companies. Engine drivers and firemen of both companies went on strike in March 1867 for shorter hours and more equitable pay. It was shown that men sometimes worked between 15 and 20 hours per day, causing the companies to reduce the hours worked to a maximum of 10 a day, and the mileage covered to 750 a week. This was sufficient to tempt the men back to work after only one day, even without an improvement in pay. By comparison, the strike in September 1919 lasted for nine days, leading to the disruption of food supplies, although this was apparently overcome by switching to road transport, and the ensuing improvement in wages was only modest.[188]

The General Strike of 1 May 1926 saw the railwaymen coming out in support of the miners, who were the protagonists, although they did agree to work food trains, while a small number of passenger services were operated by staff loyal to the company. At the outset the public assumed a total absence

Fratton Buildings, built in 1902 by the Joint Committee for their employees. Photographed in 1980.
(Photo Deane Clark)

of trains, causing patrons to stay away; on 3 May the afternoon train to Brighton left with three people on board, and the evening service to Guildford was entirely empty.[189] At the end of the first week men began to report for duty, and on the ninth day of the strike there were 15 departures and 14 arrivals. Volunteers helped the goods department to function, while the Goods Manager, a volunteer driver, fireman and a shunter managed to assemble 36 coal wagons in the Portsmouth yard, enabling sales of fuel to the public. With regard to self-help, the accolade must surely belong to the naval engineering officer who, finding the naval special on which he was travelling to London marooned at Fratton station, assumed the duties of driver and conducted the train onward.[190] After 12 days the strike was declared over, but normal services were not resumed until 17 May since the Association of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen made a short-lived gesture of solidarity with the striking Portsmouth tramwaymen, who had been harshly dismissed by the civic authority.[191]

Long hours worked must have contributed to some accidents to railway workers, but the very weight of moving rolling stock made their handling a dangerous occupation. Goods wagon shunting involved the head shunter uncoupling wagons and the other two members of the gang in chasing after the freed wagons to apply the brake, at the same time avoiding tripping over the sleepers supporting the track. A derailment at Farlington in July 1894, in which a guard died and eight passengers were injured, was probably the result of points failure, while a death at the town goods depot in 1898 was caused by inadequate signalling.[192] At the hearing of the latter case the coroner observed that exclusive of suicides, it was the seventh inquest into deaths on the railway since December 1896, a contributory factor being the 'cramped, inadequate and dangerous' condition of the town (probably the high level) station.[193] In fact town councillors had expressed their concern over the railways' disregard for public safety in both 1896 and 1897.[194] It is nowadays difficult to believe that footbridges over the track were not provided until the end of the nineteenth century; that at the harbour station was not even planned until 1895.[195] Then, as now, depression caused some unfortunates to see the train as a means of ending it all, something for which the railways can hardly be culpable. In the space of four weeks alone in 1878 two men deliberately lay down on the track to take their own lives.[196] Despite enclosing their property from the outset, the railway had always been powerless to prevent youngsters climbing fences and running over the track; in 1878 a nine-year-old failed to look in both directions and paid the penalty.[197] The incident involving the escape from the goods depot in 1881 of a bullock which butted a man who improbably offered it two pieces of bread, and who fell hitting his head on the pavement, would invite mirth were it not that the man died.[198] The eligibility of railway workers for cheap fares has been noted, but they also benefited in a number of other directions. As early as 1848 the LSWR was making a contribution of £150 a year to the Company Friendly Society, and in 1851 £1,300 was divided among all staff in recognition of their exertions in conducting the Great Exhibition traffic.[199] The SR had a flourishing Sport and Social Club, but more unusual was the Railway Rifle Club at Fratton, which competed in a league, producing the Southern Railway individual champion in 1931-2, Mr V R Sims. In the period between the wars there was even a Southern Railway Lecture and Debating Society, which occasionally ran visits to Portsmouth.[200] Both the LSWR and the LBSCR cooperated with the Provident Mutual Life Assurance Association to deduct life insurance premiums from their employees' pay, at the same time making provision for insurance agents to address the interested at the stations themselves. In the 1930s the Southern Staff Supply Stores Co. offered a range of groceries to railwaymen at reduced prices, including 'famous railway tea' at 1s 2d to 1s 8d per pound.[201]

Perhaps because of the growing awareness in the country as a whole at the turn of the century of the need for social housing, both Portsmouth companies drew up plans to assist their staff in this way. Having accepted that Southsea station was surplus to requirements, in 1905 the LBSCR considered converting it to six flats for their employees. There were three different designs, the largest of which had three main rooms, a kitchen, scullery, space for coal and a WC.[202] In the event the plan did not go forward. The companies had earlier signalled their intention in 1897 to build two blocks of 'working-class' dwellings adjacent to the town station, which the town council accepted.[203] The location was subsequently changed to a plot just north of Fratton station, where two four-storey tenements

The impact of the railway on the street patterns at Fratton and Southsea is clear from this 1933 OS map.
(PMRS)

known as Fratton Buildings were completed by 1902. The tenements had a central open landing with four flats on each floor, giving an overall total of 32 dwellings. The rateable value of the latter in April 1906 was £8 each a year, a figure twice that of almost all the houses in the vicinity of town station, but lower than the figure of £15 obtaining for the adjacent Selbourne Terrace.[204] In other words, the flats were substantially better than typical working-class property, but were not of middle-class standard. Fratton Buildings may have been the first company housing in Portsmouth, and they may have been the first to include two large communal washhouses, offset between the two tenements. Quite why there should have been a 50 per cent turnover in tenants in every quarter between 1906 and 1909 remains unclear.[205]

The Impact of the Railway on Land-Use

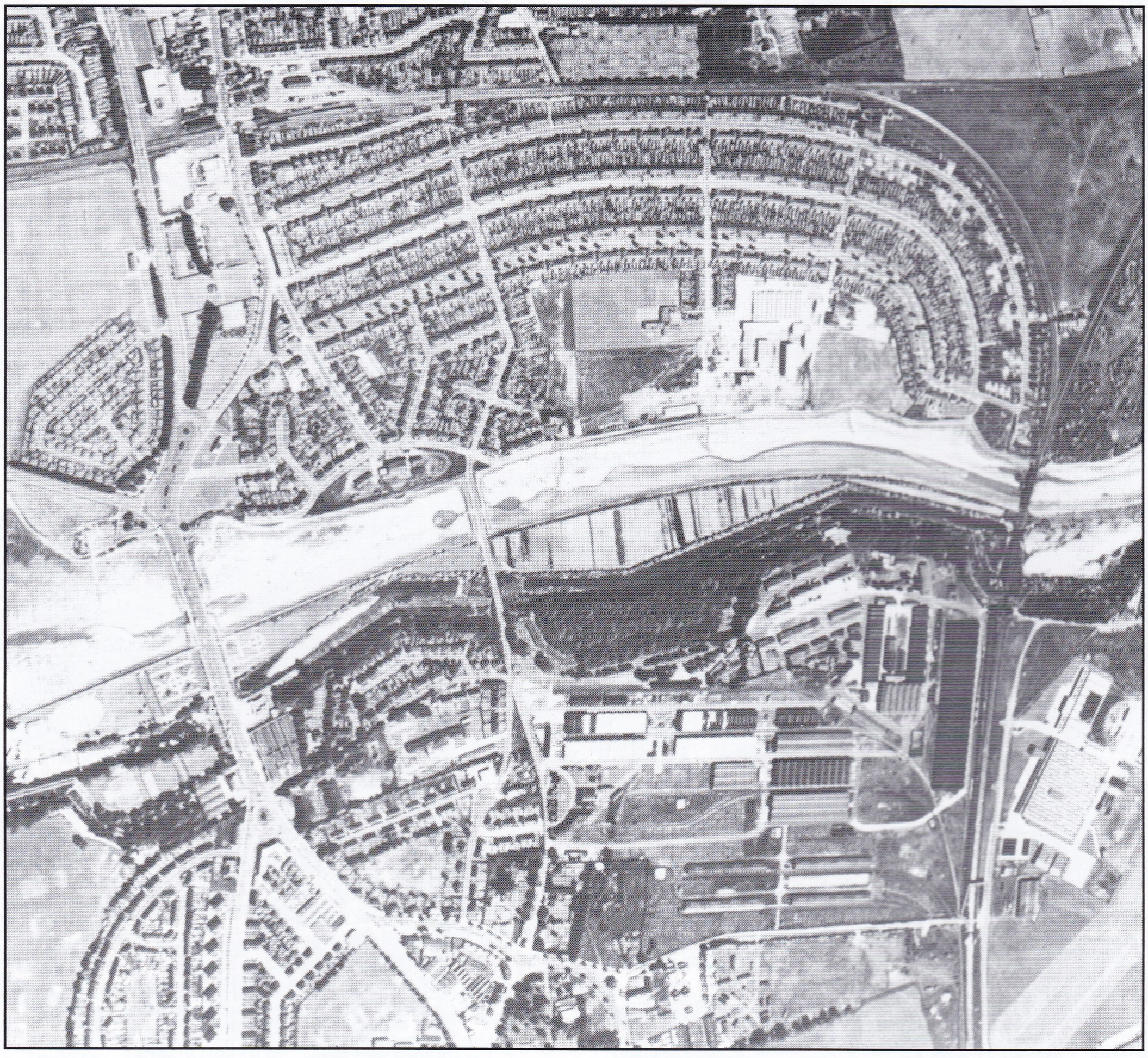
Since a railway forms a continuous strip of land, it represents a real barrier to movement by people and vehicles, which must cross at particular points. Bridges were no new phenomenon, but the level crossing, introduced by the railway to avoid the cost of bridge building, had not appeared on Portsea Island before 1847; nor had the associated delays. Crossings were constructed at Copnor, Blackfriars Road, Commercial Road, Edinburgh Road and Alfred Road, the latter two remaining throughout the life of the branch to the dockyard. Commercial Road was already one of the busiest thoroughfares in the town by the time it was bridged in 1878, while the Copnor crossing had become a byword for delays and accidents long before its replacement in 1908. The Blackfriars Road crossing was especially irksome owing to its location immediately east of the town station, where shunting operations combined with passenger and goods traffic to interfere with road movement. This was recognised by the construction of a narrow footbridge known as Jacob's Ladder, but this did not help vehicular traffic; indeed Alderman Emanuel complained in 1876 that his coach suffered delays of up to 20 minutes.[206] The council, however, was not prepared to find the money for a bridge. The problem was solved by the simple expedient of closing the crossing in 1883 when Greetham Street was extended, requiring road traffic to cross the line further east at the Somers Road bridge; a more substantial footway was simultaneously provided. The barrier the railway represented became a determinant of street patterns, and indeed in some instances of social divisions. The Portsmouth Waterside Extension Railway embankment separated the cramped, densely populated, old town of Portsea from the entirely unpeopled United Services recreation grounds, arguably created for the privileged. An *Illustrated London News* reporter travelling on the line in 1882 thought that the recreation grounds were part of Victoria Park, opened in 1878, and remarked that the embankment crossing the Park 'deprived it of any pretension to an imposing appearance'.[207] At least he had noticed the way the embankment acted as a land-use division. It is sometimes claimed that the track between town and Fratton stations represented a social divide between Landport and Southsea, but it is difficult to sustain this since the properties on both sides of the line possessed similar rateable values; middle-class Southsea was well to the south. The lower incidence of diphtheria in Southsea than in southern Landport during the 1881-2 epidemic was hardly the result of the barrier effected by the railway as has been asserted, but of the preponderance of better social conditions in central Southsea.[208]

The railway was an unconscious arbiter of urban form in another manner, for numerous are the examples of street configuration determined by the alignment of the railway. Park Road was built parallel to the embankment referred to above; streets in Fratton were confined to the north-western side of the track, while the curving nature of Walmer and Renny Roads was caused by the curve of the line; and all the housing north of Moneyfields Avenue was situated to the west of the track. For almost the whole of the nineteenth century, until the appearance of housing centred on Tangier Road, the eastern side of the railway north of Fratton was given over to uses other than housing: the goodsyard at Fratton, St Mary's Hospital and Kingston prison. The railway was thus here effectively the boundary of the built-up area. In the inter-war period, the long curves followed by Highbury Grove, Chatsworth Avenue and Hawthorn Crescent at Highbury were wholly influenced by the alignment of the railway between Portcreek and Cosham. The East Southsea Railway may no longer exist, but the evidence of its semi-circular arc between Fratton and the terminus at the western end of Granada Road is still discernable. The curving Heidelberg Road and Chestnut Avenue flank the former track at Fratton; Devonshire Square was created out of the need to have sufficient space for both a bridge over the railway and roads by-passing the bridge, which when removed gave rise to open space nestling within dense housing; St Ronan's Road ran alongside the track for much of its length; and Parkstone Avenue and Old Bridge Road were built on the site of the former track, accounting for the incongruity of relatively modern housing cheek by jowl with Victorian and Edwardian stock.

The railway also influenced urban morphology in its role as an important purchaser of land, often resulting in the demolition of housing as companies endeavoured to drive close to city centres.[209] Housing loss was not at the outset a substantial issue in Portsmouth, however, since the terminus was sited at Landport outside the old walled towns of Portsmouth and Portsea, and secondly because access through the then suburbs was achieved through the purchase of the Portsmouth canal, causing the minimum of social disturbance. Only in its last few yards did the line deviate from the canal bed, and even then there was little interference with property. Of the 24 plots purchased by the railway, no fewer than 18 were gardens, three were buildings fronting on to Commercial Road and Greetham Street and may not have been inhabited, and three contained poor quality houses, of which 26 were demolished.[210] It is therefore reasonable to suppose that between 100 and 150 people lost their homes, all of which were rented. The extension into the dockyard ran along the foot of the Portsea glacis without disturbance to dwellings. Set against the loss of 3,000 houses caused by the construction of the London and Blackwall Railway, Portsmouth had reason to be thankful that the military

CENTRAL DIVISION
KINGSTON PRISON
Mort. Chap.
Mort. Chaps.
Lodge
Club
B.M. 35·7
24·2
Kennels
Kennels
St. Mary's Ch.
Vicarage
Sch.
Kingston Recreation Ground
Recreation Ground
St. Mary's Hospital
St. Mary's Institution
(Portsmouth Corpn.)
Isolation Hospital
Paleolithic Tools found A.D. 1921
MILTON CEMETERY
(Portsmouth Corporation)
Allotment Gardens
Lodge
Stones
Posts
B.M. 24·0
B.M. 23·4
B.M. 24·5
FRATTON
Allot. Gdns.
Water Tower
Milton Lane
Engine Shed
Fratton Sta.
Football Ground
Milton Villa
Tennis Courts
Liby.
MILTON
Band Stand
MILTON PARK
Training College Hostel
Pavilion
Corset Factory
GOLDSMITH AVENUE
FRATTON ROAD
FAWCETT ROAD
LAWRENCE ROAD
ALBERT ROAD
HIGHLAND ROAD
EASTNEY ROAD
DEVONSHIRE AVENUE
HAVELOCK PARK
Recreation Ground
EASTNEY
Tramways & Bus Depot
Nursery
Laundry
HIGHLAND ROAD CEMETERY
Mort. Chap.
B.M. 19·8
B.M. 23·0
B.M. 18·7
EASTNEY BARRACKS
(Royal Marines)
School
Meml. Pav.
Cricket Ground
B.M. 27·2
Boat House
Slip
Eastney Fort West
B.Ss. W↑D
B.M. 18·0
B.S. W↑D
Playing Field
Playing Field
Club House
Lumps Fort
(Dismantled)
Cumberland House
Pav.
CRANESWATER PARK
Canoe Lake
Tennis Grounds
Position Finding Cells No. 7 Station
Wimbledon Park
Schs.
Eastfield
Hotel
Concrete Base
Storm Drainage
SOUTH PARADE PIER
Band Stand
EASTERN PARADE
SOUTH PARADE

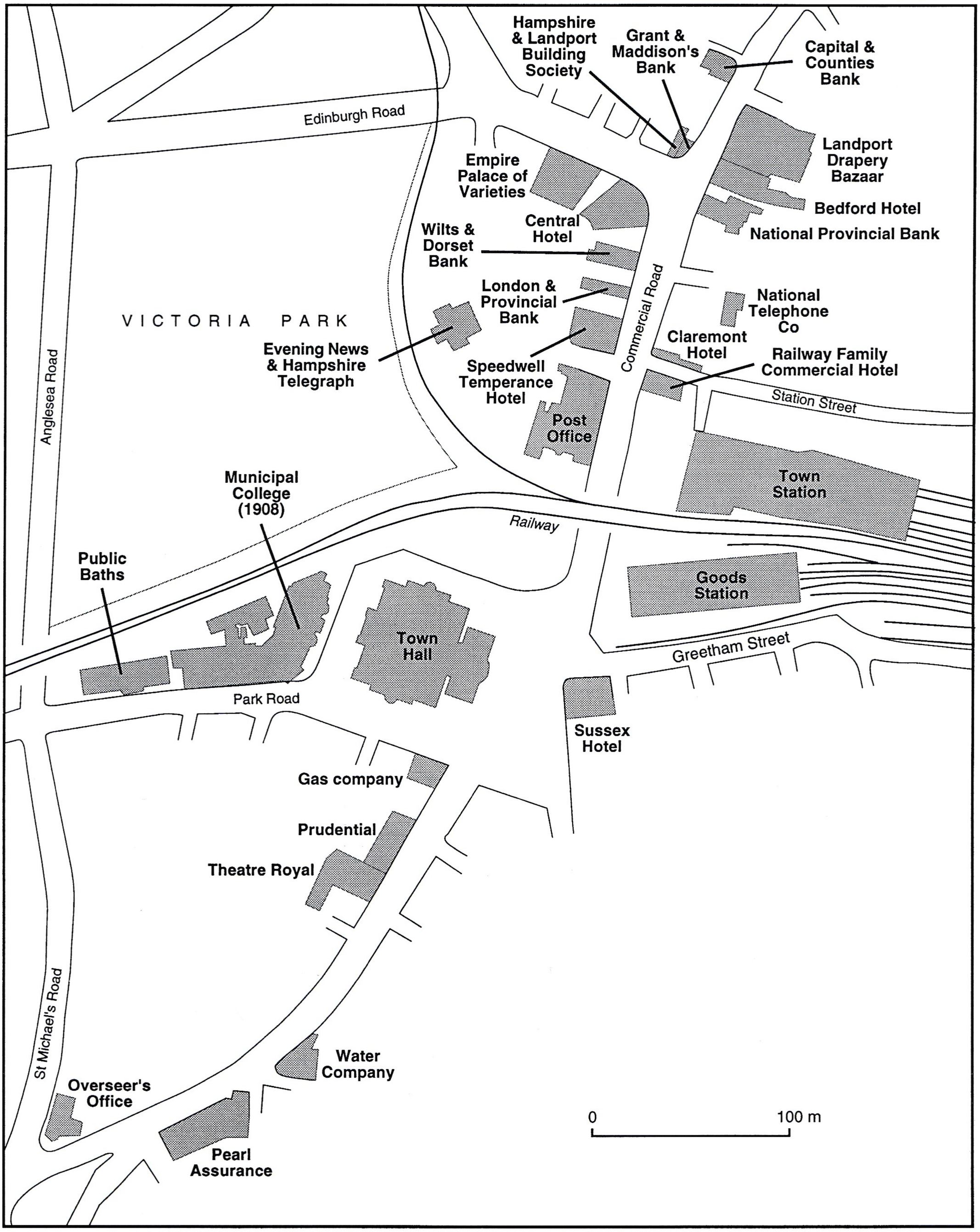
The curves of the line north of Portscreek influenced the layout of the roads at Highbury. The sidings serving the army establishments at Hilsea are also visible in this photograph taken about 1965.
(Portsmouth Libraries, Local Studies Collection)



authorities refused to sanction a terminus in the old town.[211] Both the station building and the goods depot were found wanting within two decades, and were replaced in 1866 by more substantial structures, but without recourse to fresh land purchase. Even the provision of four tracks from the station as far as the Somers Road bridge in 1888 was achieved by realigning Canal Walk with a loss of only four houses and part of a public house.[212]

The growth of goods traffic nevertheless brought relentless need for more space, causing the companies to buy two narrow strips of land to give access for horse-drawn carts from Station Street, and then in 1903 all the remaining properties on the south side of the road.[213] Twelve houses were removed, as were between 50 to 70 people. The purchase of further land and properties, planned in the 1890s, allowed the railways to extend their yard on the north side of the main line as far east as Durham Street, and in collaboration with the town council to lengthen Station Street so that it met Durham Street.[214] As a consequence much of Dorset Street disappeared. Altogether some 63 houses, of which 17 were already owned by the railways, and between 250 and 380 people were removed.[215] Not only were more rendered homeless at the turn of the century than at the time of the first construction, but also almost as many suffered from the eastward extension by the corporation in 1883 of Greetham Street on the southern margin of railway land; 57 houses and between 230 and 350 people were involved. Judging by the frequency with which it appears in the literature, the demolition of the 25 houses comprising Kensington Terrace resulting from the lengthening of Greetham Street caused some controversy at the time, but for once it was not a railway

Portsmouth town centre activities, 1900.



initiative.[216] By comparison, losses incurred in the construction of the Southsea Railway were restricted to a dozen middle-class villas, whose inhabitants doubtless suffered mere inconvenience.[217] The land on which the extension to the harbour was built was owned by the War Office, the corporation and the Carter family; a house in the Old Gunwharf was the sole victim.[218] The purchase of a substantial area of farmland at Fratton, originally effected to allow direct running from the main line to the Southsea branch, a strategy subsequently shelved, was also achieved with the minimum of social disruption. Space was released at the town station site; first the engine shed was moved to Fratton in 1891, followed by some freight operations such as live cattle, and then finally the goods depot in 1936.[219]

Of considerable social and economic import was the railways' influence on the centre of gravity of the town. When the station was first opened, it lay in Old Portsmouth, Landport then being a brash new suburb lacking civic or social pretension, 'the home of many of the dockyard artisans'.[220] The immediate response was the opening of *Hogg's Railway Tavern*, at which dinner could be secured for 1s, breakfast could be eaten before the departure of the first train, and where accommodation was so superior that 'it is in fact as nearly as possible like your own home', testifying to the social standing of contemporary passengers.[221] Gradually the benefits brought by the railway - the telegraph, parcels service, goods of all descriptions, quite apart from linking people swiftly with other places - caused the notion of 'distance from the railway station' to filter into public consciousness, assisted by the existence of considerable personal immobility in the Victorian town, enshrined in the term 'the walking city'.[222] Moreover, not only was there more space for the expansion of business in Commercial Road than in Portsmouth or Portsea, but also Landport was becoming more central to the town as a whole as the housing frontier marched south-east in Southsea, east in Fratton, and north in Mile End and Copnor. The railway may not have created these spatial changes, but it enabled them to take place at the speed they did.

The removal of the Portsmouth and Portsea fortifications in the 1860s and 1870s did nothing to retard the advantages of Landport as a commercial centre, for almost all the land released was retained for use by public bodies: the armed services claimed 56 per cent, the dockyard 14 per cent, the corporation 15 per cent and the Church 5 per cent. Commerce secured only 5 per cent of the total, rendering the removal of the fortifications of little significance to this activity.[223] Visiting dignitaries were as often as not conveyed to and from the dockyard and the railway station, by-passing the old civic centre in Portsmouth High Street. The Town Hall was increasingly marginalised, and only two decades after the opening of the terminus the proposal by John Baker, a future Mayor, 'that a Town Hall with suitable public offices should be erected in a central position in the Borough', was approved by the town council.[224]

That such advice was accepted was the result in part of the land available to the corporation on the removal of the ramparts, but in part of the centrality of the area round the town station. The borough contributed through the opening of the Overseers of the Poor's Office in 1879, the Free Library and public baths in 1883, and in 1890, almost half a century after John Baker's plea, the opening of the new Town Hall within a stone's throw of the station. Contributing to the strength of the cluster was the Gas Company's offices in 1876 (rebuilt in 1915), the head Post Office opposite the station, moved from Portsmouth High Street in 1881, the Portsmouth Water Company's offices opened in 1883, the Theatre Royal in 1884, the Prudential in 1891, and the Pearl Buildings, now Charterhouse, in 1899. Portsmouth Municipal College was added in 1908. As the map indicates, by 1900 six hotels and five banks were in business in the vicinity of the station.

Few towns in the country underwent such an experience.[225] Liverpool's civic centre was constructed opposite Lime Street station, but the latter was the edge of the commercial core. Arguably Portsmouth can compete with the celebrated example of Huddersfield, where solicitors, banks, insurance offices and woollen merchants vacated the Market Square in favour of the station a quarter of a mile distant. The power of inertia was more powerful in Portsmouth, and it was not until the end of the century that the professions came to be concentrated in Commercial Road. For some, however, such as solicitors, the more traditional ambience of Old Portsmouth was better suited to their ethos: they numbered 19 there in 1900, compared with 15 in Commercial Road.[226] The development of office blocks, such as the Prudential Buildings where in 1900 there were 21 firms in total, was a new departure for Portsmouth, but this should not obscure the fact that the station itself spawned its own group of transport-related firms, 11 such trading there in 1900. It is not claimed that the railway created the Commercial Road business district, but it is clear that it was a prime mover in the new development in the life of the borough.

Conclusion

As in so many aspects of life, transport is affected by cycles of technological change. The railway dominated the second half of the nineteenth century only to find that road transport contrived to do the same after the Second World War. Since the movement of people and goods is fundamental to life, the railway was able to make an important social and economic contribution during the Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war periods. At the same time it very much reflected the attitudes of the society it served. As Simmons has remarked, towns were still dancing to the railways when Queen Victoria died, even if the tunes were not those of the 1840s; the refrains lingered on, albeit in a lower key.[227] This paper has endeavoured to identify the melodies, their composers and the reaction of the dancers during the first hundred years of the railway concert in Portsmouth.

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